HICKOK AND CODY

by

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SILVER PICTURES

FADE IN:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED OVER SCREEN: New York City, 1873

The white marble building is located on Foley Square. A stone's throw from the infamous Tombs prison.

INT. COURTROOM

Packed to the rafters with spectators.

WILLIAM "BOSS" TWEED sits at the defense table. Tweed is six feet, three hundred pounds, with a mutton chop beard to make up for his balding head. A man of huge proportions and huger appetites. He calmly eats peppermints from a wax paper bag as he watches his ATTORNEY address the JUDGE.

ATTORNEY
Your honor, for over twenty years, my client, William Tweed, has been one of this city's most respected statesmen. Now this illustrious servant of the people stands accused of over two hundred counts of embezzlement, extortion and misappropriation of city funds. Such monstrous allegations can be summed up in only one word:
(a beat, loudly)
Lies! Foul, vile, scandalous lies that mock the very foundation of our judicial system. I ask, no I demand that the prosecution, which is, incidentally, composed solely of my client's political adversaries, bring forth this so called 'incriminating ledger' they claim to have obtained from Mr. Tweed's own office. Let them prove, if they can, the validity of these scurrilous charges once and for all.

JUDGE
Mr. Tilden, what say you to the defense counsel's request?

The prosecutor rises. SAMUEL TILDEN, sixty, tall, dressed in his trademark white suit. His patrician features remind us of a nineteenth century John Lindsey. A man of decent sensibilities, but somewhat cold and imperious, Tilden is above all a politician.

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Seated behind Tilden, in the front row of visitors is JAMES GORDON BENNETT, the youthful newspaper magnate.

TILDEN
Your honor, I consider it a privilege to call for the record Exhibit A.

A bailiff presents a leather briefcase to the judge who opens it and pulls out a ledger.

Tilden looks smugly over at a placid Tweed.

The judge opens the ledger. Surprise, then indignation sweeps over his face. He quickly flips through the pages, then glowers over at the prosecution.

JUDGE
Mr. Tilden, this ledger is blank.

Pandemonium breaks out in the courtroom.

TILDEN
Impossible.

Tilden hurries over to the bench. Checks the ledger for himself. My God, it's true.

Tweed, over at the defense table, pops another mint into his mouth. Smiles.

EXT. FIVE POINTS - NIGHT

The junction of Cross, Anthony, Little Water, Orange and Mulberry Street (today the intersection of Chinatown, Little Italy and Mulberry Park).

In eighteen seventy-three, it is the worst slum district in New York. And the most dangerous.

A collection of winding, narrow, muddy, unpaved streets. Dilapidated buildings house an array of ominous saloons and pox ridden brothels.

The police, in fear of their lives, avoid the place completely.

ROBERT CHESNEY, an elderly court clerk, scurries along the deserted street, clutching a package, wrapped in butcher's paper, to his chest. He keeps glancing behind him as if expecting the devil himself to leap from the shadows. And then, suddenly, in one terrifying moment, his worst fears are realized as he collides with a figure who steps out of

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the darkness.

Chesney recoils with a shout of terror only to discover a stunningly beautiful wench of Amazon proportions standing before him. The woman, who goes by the sobriquet of HELLCAT MAGGIE, smiles, revealing teeth that have been filed to vicious looking points.

MAGGIE
We've been waiting for you, dearie.

Chesney steps back, only to bump into another figure looming behind him. He whirls around, and his eyes widen as he recognizes DANDY JOHNNY DOLAN, a dapper gent of forty, carrying a thick silver tipped cane. A nasty little thug, SLOPS, stands alongside Dolan.

DOLAN
Hello, Chesney.

Dolan grabs the package out of Chesney's hands and impatiently tears off the wrapping to reveal a ledger, similar to the one seen in the courtroom. Except for one important difference. As a grinning Dolan browses through it, we see its pages are filled with financial transactions.

DOLAN
You've done the Boss a service he won't soon forget.

CHESNEY
It's not his gratitude I want. It's his money.

DOLAN
Of course. After all, you've earned every penny.

Grinning at Maggie and Slops, he takes a sack of coins from his pocket and tosses it at Chesney who fails to snatch it in time. The sack falls to the ground.

DOLAN
Well, go on. Pick it up.

A beat, then Chesney slowly bends down for the coins. Suddenly Dolan swings his cane high in the air. And as he smashes it down on Chesney's skull we

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MISSOURI PLAINS - DAY

ROLL CREDITS

Tight on the imposing figure of BUFFALO BILL CODY.

Cody is twenty eight, with shoulder length hair, a mustache and a small goatee. He wears an immaculate cream colored buckskin suit, with a crimson shirt and a broad white sombrero. His boyish good looks belie a lifetime of hardship and adventure. Pony Express rider, union soldier, Indian fighter and world renowned hunter, Cody is, in the words of General Philip H. Sheridan, "the greatest Army scout who ever lived."

At the moment, he stands pointing the barrel of a silver inlaid Winchester directly in our face.

CODY
Surrender your weapons, McKlandess. For I, Buffalo Bill Cody have made a solemn vow to bring you to justice.

We now see the evil JAKE MCKLANDESS and five of his outfit. Their hands hovering just above their pistols.

Standing alongside Cody is a slightly built GUNSLINGER who also sports shoulder length hair and mustache. He's dressed in a black Prince Albert frock coat, flowered brocade vest and black wide brimmed hat. Tucked into the red sash at his waist are two ivory handled Navy Colts, worn butt forward.

GUNSLINGER
Do as he says you cowardly varmint, or by thunder, we'll bury you where you stand.

MCKLANDESS
Looks like we're finished boys.

But instead of surrendering, McKlandess and his men skin their guns. Fortunately, Cody and his friend are too fast for them. Cody blasts away with his rifle, while the Gunslinger fills his hands and begins firing with both Colts.

The issue is never in doubt. McKlandess and company die spectacular (and lingering) deaths. When the smoke clears there's not a single villain left standing.

Our heroes lack even the smallest scratch. Surprisingly, there is no blood to be seen anywhere.

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A moment of silence that ends in an explosion of APPLAUSE and WHISTLES.

CAMERA PULLS BACK and now we see rows of cheering onlookers. Cody and the Gunslinger acknowledge their approval and salute their fallen foes who leap to their feet to join in the bows.

Above them a banner announces: THE KANSAS CITY FAIR AND EXPOSITION PRESENTS:

WILLIAM FREDERICK CODY AND TEXAS JACK OMAHUNDRO
as himself as Wild Bill Hickok
in
THE MCKLANDESS MASSACRE

The festivities are in full swing. Everyone is in their Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes. Faded calico and gingham. Austere broadcloth and dungarees.

Kids chase each other through the throng, kicking up clumps of dust.

Families crowd around stalls offering simple, hearty foods.

A wooden carousel whirls merrily around.

Three cowboys -- shady, hard-bitten -- loiter near Cody's ticket stand.

OUTSKIRTS OF CROWD

As the real WILD BILL HICKOK rides up. Texas Jack may have copied the clothes and hair style, but that's where the similarity ends. Unlike Jack (or Cody) there is no trace of boyishness in Hickok. Handsome and powerfully built, he is thirty six and looks every day of it. His clothes may have seen better days, but he carries himself with a world weary authority that commands attention. He is, in short, the genuine article. An authentic American legend.

He watches with wry skepticism, as Cody addresses the audience.

CODY
And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how Wild Bill Hickok and I defeated Jake McKlandess and his ruthless gang of border ruffians.
(waves farewell)
Thank you. And God bless you all.

CONTINUED:

END CREDITS as Cody makes his way over to a plankboard barrel bar. A bartender hands him a whiskey bottle. He pours himself a shot.

Hickok comes up beside him.

HICKOK
Funny, I don't recall us tanglin' with any Jake McKlandess.

Cody's face lights up at seeing his friend and mentor.

CODY
Goddamn, Bill. Glad you could make it.

But a quick glance tells him that Hickok is not real pleased with the show's fabrications. A chagrined Cody looks to change the subject.

CODY
Hardly recognized you without a tin star.

Cody grabs another glass. Pours his friend a drink.

HICKOK
I've given the badge up for good. Got fed up being a target for every two bit saddle tramp out to make a name for himself.

Hickok notices the cowboys slouching by the ticket booth. He keeps an eye on them as he drinks.

CODY
'Bout time you realized there's easier ways to make a livin' then gettin' shot at. Take me for instance. Play actin's a whole lot safer then trackin' Indians.

HICKOK
I'd rather be shot.

CODY
This is the place for it. Me, I've got responsibilities.
(a beat)
Yessir, Louisa's a whole lot happier knowing my scalp ain't gonna wind up decorating some Cheyenne medicine lodge.

CONTINUED:

He pours another round of drinks.

CODY
I sure will miss her.

HICKOK
You goin' somewhere?

CODY
(sheepish)
I'm leavin' tomorrow for New York to act in a play.
(off Hickok's look; defensive)
Hell Bill, Louisa and me could barely scrape by on my army pay. I'll be gettin' a hundred dollars a week just to stand on some goddamn stage.

Hickok is impressed in spite of himself.

Cody spots Texas Jack approaching, still in costume.

CODY
Texas Jack's coming along with me.

HICKOK
Texas Jack?
(pause)
No one's gonna pay good money to see Texas Jack Omahundro.

CODY
They ain't payin' to see him. They're payin' to see him be you.

TEXAS JACK
Howdy, Bill.

Hickok reaches over and lifts off Jack's hat. The long hair comes off with it. Under the wig, Jack's own hair is short and thinning.

HICKOK
Jack.

As he holds up the offending hairpiece, Hickok's scowl tells Cody what he thinks about Texas Jack and the theatre in general.

CODY
Easy wages, Bill. Just ripe for the pickin'.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
(pointing O.S.)
Looks like yours are about to be picked.

THE TICKET STAND

Where the cowboys have finally made their move. Guns drawn, they're making off with the cash box.

THE BAR

As Cody sweeps up his rifle and hurries off.

CODY
The hell they are.

THE TICKET STAND

The cowboys come to a sudden halt. Their escape path blocked by Cody's rifle.

CODY
I'll take my money, boys.

But before Cody can press the point a fourth cowboy, HARVEY, appears behind him and places a gun barrel to his head. Cody freezes.

Their leader, a SCARFACE hellion, grins, pleased to have tree'd such a celebrity.

A confident Cody knows he still has an ace in the hole.

CODY
You boys know Bill Hickok don't you.

By now a crowd has gathered and the cowboys spot Texas Jack in the crowd.

HARVEY
(pointing at Jack)
Yeah, and that ain't him.

CODY
That's right, he ain't.

As Hickok steps forward.

CODY
But he is.

CONTINUED:

The crowd reacts. Awe. Fear. Excitement.

HARVEY
Well, shit my britches, if it ain't Wild Bill Hickok himself.

SCARFACE
He don't look so wild to me.

CODY
Look closer.

Hickok's sheer presence, the palpable sense of quiet danger that he projects is enough to give the cowboys pause.

HICKOK
Boys, you just give Mr. Cody back his earnings and we'll forget this ever happened.

But instead, Scarface cocks his pistol and points it at Hickok.

SCARFACE
You're the son-of-a-bitch who shot Phil Coe over in Abilene last year.

Hickok barely reacts. It's as if he almost expected this.

HICKOK
He an acquaintance of yours?

SCARFACE
He was the best horse thief and man killer I ever rode with.

HICKOK
Why is it I always shoot the popular ones?

SCARFACE
I've been waitin' for a chance to blow you to hell.

A quick glance between Hickok and Cody. They've fought side by side countless times, and each knows what the other is going to do.

At that moment Scarface begins firing wildly at Hickok. But his agitation combined with the woeful inaccuracy of the guns of that era throws off his aim. Hickok makes a quarter turn to present a smaller target as he pulls one of his Colts.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Friend, I hate to do this.

He fires once. Scarface takes a bullet in the chest and is dead before he hits the ground.

Meanwhile Cody drives his rifle butt into Harvey's mid-section. As Harvey doubles over, Cody yanks his gun from his hand.

Hickok whips out his second pistol to freeze the other two cowboys in their tracks.

HICKOK
You boys also ride with Coe?

It takes a moment for one of the cowboys to find his voice.

COWBOY
Yeah, but we... we never much cared for the thievin' bastard.

A beat, then Hickok slowly thumbs down the hammers of his Colts.

The cowboys don't need to be told twice. They each grab hold of the slumping Harvey and scurry away. The crowd, including Texas Jack, breaks into cheers. Half of them think this is still part of Cody's show.

An annoyed Hickok looks over at them as the sun bursts out from behind a cloud. He winces from the brightness reflecting off the baking prairie.

HICKOK'S POV

The sun's glare affects his vision as a painful white flare blurs the faces around him.

HICKOK AND CODY

As Cody picks up his cash box.

CODY
The way you handled them cowboys -- It was epic.

HICKOK
You should be more careful, Will, or those easy wages just might get you killed.

CONTINUED:

CODY
(gazing O.S.)
Marshal Speers never liked you much did he?

HICKOK
Never had much use for him either.

CODY
That could be a problem.

He points off into the distance where -

A tall man (SPEERS) comes towards them backed up by a half dozen deputies.

HICKOK
Shit.

INT. KANSAS CITY JAIL - THE NEXT MORNING

Marshal Speers approaches a cell door.

INT. CELL

A dirty, dingy hovel with two stained and painfully thin cots.

Cody sits on one of the beds disgustedly pulling gnats off the mattress.

Hickok stands gazing out a small barred window.

SPEERS opens the cell door.

SPEERS
All right, Cody. You can go.

Cody, unwilling to appear anxious, slowly gets up off the bed.

Hickok moves with him towards the door.

SPEERS
Not you, Hickok.

Hickok halts. Knowing his friend's temper, Cody steps between the two men.

CODY
Now Marshal, what Bill did yesterday was self defense, pure and simple.

CONTINUED:

SPEERS
So I hear. But I figure to give him sixty days to cool his heels.

HICKOK
You tin horn son of a bitch....

SPEERS
Ninety days.
(smiling)
'less of course, you plan on leaving the territory like your friend here.

Before Hickok can answer.

CODY
Hold on, Bill. Maybe Tom here's got an idea. This kind of thing would never happen to you in New York.

HICKOK
What the hell would I do in New York?

CODY
No reason why you shouldn't be makin' a hundred dollars a week instead of Texas Jack. After all, it's <u>you</u> folks want to see.

HICKOK
I'm no actor.

CODY
Neither am I, but I ain't about to let that stop me.
(a beat)
Why think of it. The Great Scout and the Prince of Pistoleers. We'd dazzle 'em.

Cody can see his friend is wavering. He takes two train tickets from his pocket.

CODY
Hell, the trip alone would be better than spending ninety days bunkin' in this trash heap.

Hickok's gaze shifts from the tickets, to the cell, and then back to the tickets.

CONTINUED:

CODY
What do you say, Bill?

A beat and then Hickok grabs one of the tickets out of Cody's hands.

HICKOK
Tell Texas Jack to burn that damn wig.

And with that he moves past Speers and exits out of the cell.

Cody smiles, pleased with Hickok's decision.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND CENTRAL DEPOT - DAY

Though situated at the same location, Forty-Second between Lexington and Park, the depot bears only a slight resemblance to the beautiful Beaux-Arts style train station that exists today. Instead, it is a cupolaed three-story brick building half obscured by the BLACK SMOKE belched forth from the many locomotives that pass through its terminal.

A train pulls past the CAMERA, REVEALING Cody and Hickok standing on the crowded platform, having just arrived in the city. Their long hair and style of dress (especially Cody's buckskin) provoke curious stares from passers-by.

(Throughout their stay in New York, Hickok and Cody will remain the focus of attention wherever they go.)

HICKOK
I thought you said there'd be someone here to meet us.

Outside we hear the sound of an approaching band.

CODY
(smiling)
Who do you think that's for?

They pick up their bags and move their way through the crowd.

EXT. PARK AVENUE AND FORTY-SECOND STREET - DAY

Hickok and Cody get their first glimpse of New York. As they look past the cobblestone streets, there isn't a building to be seen that stands over six stories high. The

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famous skyline has yet to come into existence. The city itself only runs from the Battery to Fifty-Ninth Street. Beyond Fifty-Ninth, there's nothing but farms and fields. The population stands at about a million people. It's estimated that half of them live in poverty. There are thirty thousand criminals and two thousand gambling dens within the city limits. All in all, it's the toughest, most dangerous city in America.

Crippled Civil War veterans look for handouts from nattily dressed business men. Street vendors CRY OUT their wares, topped off by the plaintive WAIL of the HOT CORN GIRLS.

HOT CORN GIRL
Here's your nice hot corn. Smoking hot. For you who has money. For me who has none. Hot corn. Smoking hot. Right from the pot.

EXT. THE CURB

The avenue is packed with people lined up to see the parade. Hickok and Cody push their way to the front of the crowd. Some business men stand nearby, their noses buried in newspapers that bear such HEADLINES as:

"Ledger Missing."

"Tweed Trial Postponed."

Cody is enjoying himself immensely as they watch the marching band pass by.

CODY
I'll tell you, Bill, this is going to be epic.

The band is followed by a SMILING MAN in top hat and swallow tail coat who stops in front of Hickok and Cody and addresses the crowd.

SMILING MAN
Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my humble pleasure to introduce to you New York City's latest and greatest attraction...

Our heroes prepare to step off the curb to greet their public.

SMILING MAN
...The Agnes Lake Hippo Olympiad and Mammoth Circus!

CONTINUED:

Hickok and Cody are caught totally by surprise. The smiling man moves out of the way as AGNES LAKE, a beautiful, athletically built woman in her early thirties dressed in sequin tights and riding bareback a huge white stallion, gallops up in front of the crowd. The horse rears up on his hind legs as the crowd breaks into applause.

CODY
Agnes Lake? Who the hell is Agnes Lake?

HICKOK
She's what I call an attraction.

Hickok and Agnes lock eyes. There's definitely a strong spark of sexual chemistry at work here. Hickok removes his hat and presents her with a gentlemanly bow. She smiles politely and then rides off.

The circus acts begin to pass in review, but neither Hickok or Cody pay them any mind. Hickok is too busy watching Agnes ride off into the distance; while Cody is crushed by the lack of public adulation.

BOY (V.O.)
Mr. Hickok? Mr. Cody?

Cody's mood picks up. Recognition. It's about time. He and Hickok turn around only to discover a lone BOY holding out a piece of paper.

BOY
Message for you.

Cody takes the note. Reads.

CODY
(to Hickok)
It's from Miller, the theatre manager. Says we're to meet him at the Breveroot Hotel.

The boy stands waiting for a tip. Hickok flips him a coin.

BOY
Thank you, Mr. Cody.

Now that really pisses them off.

EXT. BROADWAY AND THIRTY EIGHTH STREET

Hickok and Cody are seated in a hansom cab that's stopped smack in the middle of an absolutely hellacious traffic jam.

Carriages, cabs, delivery wagons, omnibuses and enormous flatbed wagons are among the vehicles struggling to make some headway.

At the intersection, another load of vehicles tries to join or push its way across the stream of traffic.

There are no signal lights or traffic control of any kind.

The RINGING of iron clad wheels and hooves against the cobblestone, the CREAK of leather, the RATTLE of chains and the SHOUTED curses of the drivers makes the DIN louder than heard on Broadway today.

It is chaos.

EXT. CAB

As a pajama clad pigtailed Chinaman runs in front of them, forcing the DRIVER to pull hard on the reins.

DRIVER
Watch where yer walkin' ya celestial bastard or I'll grind ya into the muck.

A wagon led by three teams of dray horses tries to squeeze in ahead of them.

The cab driver beats at the wagoner with his whip.

DRIVER
(continuing)
Get back there ya bog hoppin' thick headed weasely Mick.

Cody is enjoying every minute of the lunacy around them.

CODY
Where do you think they're all goin'?

Hickok looks around grimly. He's already starting to miss those wide open plains.

HICKOK
I don't know, but it's gonna take 'em awhile to get there.

CONTINUED:

And they come to another sudden halt, jolting them in their seats.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE AND TWENTY EIGHTH

The cab driver, looking for a short cut, has them riding under the train tracks.

Cody is looking up at them in amazement.

The driver notices.

DRIVER
(sourly)
That's the El. Just been built.
(off Hickok's look)
Elevated train.

CODY
You hear that Bill? They got trains that run in the sky.

In the near distance, we HEAR the CHUG of a locomotive.

DRIVER
Look out, here comes one of them damn things now.

The driver ducks his head.

Hickok follows suit.

Cody stands up to get a better look.

The steam engine driven train THUNDERS overhead, showering him in smoke, oil and sparks.

Cody frantically beats out the sparks. In his struggle, he falls back into his seat.

He laughs as he watches the train disappear. He's having a great time.

EXT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - DAY

Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street. Six stories tall with crown-corniced windows (sheltered by striped awnings), this two hundred room hotel is one of the most fashionable in the city.

Hickok's and Cody's cab pulls up to the curb.

CONTINUED:

DRIVER
Breveroot Hotel, gents.

They step down.

DRIVER
That'll be two dollars.

CODY
Two dollars? At the station, you said two bits.

The driver crowds Cody.

DRIVER
Luggage charge.

Four burly CABBIES wander over from their stand near the hotel.

DRIVER TWO
You got a problem, Benny?

DRIVER (BENNY)
These bohunks won't cough up their fare.

The cabbies are spoiling for a fight.

CABBIE ONE
(to Cody)
Listen bub, Boss Tweed himself owns this hack company.

HICKOK
(to Cody)
Boss who?

Cody shrugs, doesn't know.

Cabbie Two has been staring at Cody, trying to place him.

CABBIE TWO
(to Benny)
Hey, ain't that one there Buffalo Bill Cody?

BENNY
I don't care if he's Daniel fucking Boone. I want my money.

Hickok nudges Cody.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Give the man his two bits, Will.

CODY
Stay out of this.

BENNY
Yeah, stay out of this you long haired son of a bitch.

Hickok stiffens at the insult.

HICKOK
Give him the two bits.

CODY
Now Bill, don't go gettin' riled. He didn't mean it.
(to Benny)
Did you friend?

Oh yes he did. Benny goes nose to nose with Hickok, looking to intimidate him.

BENNY
Maybe I'll just take the rest out of this rube's hide.

Cody puts a hand on his friend.

CODY
Bill, we're guests in town, remember. This ain't Abilene.
(no answer)
Bill, you listening to me?
(still no response)
Shit.

Cody turns quickly and punches Benny in the face, knocking him to the ground.

HICKOK
What the hell you do that for?

CODY
To keep you from doing it.

HICKOK
I wasn't gonna hit him.

CONTINUED:

CODY
(surprised)
You wasn't.

Before Hickok can respond, two fists lash out at them, connecting solidly with their jaws.

Hickok and Cody hit the ground together.

The cabbies pull out blackjacks, ready to finish them off.

Hickok glares blame at Cody as they push themselves off the ground and wade into their attackers.

Cody flings out his arms and dives on two of the cabbies knocking them to the ground. The other two come at Hickok.

One of them raises his sap to brain him, but Hickok grabs hold of the other cabbie, who takes the blow instead. Before the cabbie has time to try again, Hickok pounds him senseless.

Cody is wrestling on the ground with his cabbies who flail at him with their blackjacks. Most of their shots miss their target though Cody does take a few lumps. He finally manages to grab hold of both of them by the scruff of the neck and cracks their heads together. They drop to the ground.

Hickok and Benny exchange a fierce flurry of blows. Finally, with a walloping combination of punches Hickok puts him down.

Hickok and Cody look around but there's no one left to fight.

Just then, Benny rises up behind Cody who senses the movement, turns and pile drives a fist into his stomach.

As Benny doubles over, Cody hauls back and belts him square on the chin. Benny spins and collides with the rump of one of his horses.

The peeved animal kicks Benny in the privates.

With a high-pitched groan, Benny topples over on his face.

Hickok takes out a coin and tosses it down on the body.

HICKOK
I told you he'd take the two bits.

CONTINUED:

Cody takes a rag off the cab driver's seat. He dabs at his bloody nose.

INT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - LOBBY - MINUTES LATER

Dominated by a huge marble fountain. Settees covered in wild animal skins, walls wainscotted in rich black walnut and an arched frescoed ceiling create a sense of impressive luxury.

Hickok and Cody follow a BELLBOY through the lobby. They try to appear nonchalant, but it's obvious they're greatly impressed by the opulence that surrounds them.

The bellboy leads them to:

THE ELEVATOR

He carries their bags inside, but both Hickok and Cody stop at the doorway.

CODY
What the hell is this?

BELLBOY
It's a perpendicular railway. Carries you right to your floor without you having to move a muscle.

CODY
(admiringly)
Now ain't that something.

Cody steps inside the elevator. Turns to Hickok, who's still looking doubtful.

CODY
Hop aboard, Bill. This is what I call an adventure.

HICKOK
And I call it one less chance I have to take.

He heads for the stairs.

Cody shakes his head at his friend's stubborness as the elevator operator closes the door.

INT. ELEVATOR

Cody's trying to look as if he's done this a hundred times.

CONTINUED:

BELLBOY
Third floor.

Cody flinches as the elevator starts its journey. Both the bellboy and the elevator operator pretend not to notice his nervousness.

INT. THIRD FLOOR

Hickok has just reached the landing as the elevator doors open and Cody struts out.

CODY
Helluva ride.

He swaggers by Hickok, who looks over at the elevator and shakes his head. He's still not convinced it's safe.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MINUTES LATER

A beautiful room. Expensive walnut furniture, leather chairs, heavy velvet drapes, gilt framed pictures on the wall.

Hickok examines a basket of delicacies that sits on the table. He removes a bottle of champagne which has a card attached.

HICKOK
(reading)
Compliments of the Breveroot Hotel.

We HEAR the SOUND of running water in the bathroom as Hickok pops the champagne cork and takes a big swig from the bottle. Not bad.

CODY (V.O.)
Hey Bill, get in here.

THE BATHROOM

A delighted Cody has the faucets in both the sink and bathtub running full blast.

CODY
You ever see anything so grand?

Hickok runs a hand under the bathtub faucet.

HICKOK
No, but I can get used to it.

CONTINUED:

CODY
Now I'll show you a real miracle.

He steps aside, revealing... a toilet bowl. Hickok's eyes light up as Cody pulls the overhead chain. The sound of the flush fills the room. A miracle indeed.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMMANY HALL - DAY

The political stronghold of Boss Tweed. Located on Fourteenth Street and Third Avenue, near the Theatre district. (Tony Pastor's Variety Hall is next door.) The three story red brick building has three separate entrances and is festooned with American flags and political banners proclaiming such slogans as "William Tweed - Friend of the Working Man."

THE LONG ROOM

Tammany's main assembly area. The smoke filled, flag draped arena is packed with elegantly dressed men in high silk hats busily shouting, plotting, wheeling and dealing. Pay off money is passed along openly without fear of censure.

INT. TWEED'S OFFICE

Tweed sits behind a massive desk surrounded by silver serving carts. Half a dozen uncovered platters lay before him. He consumes his lunch with well practiced gusto.

MAYOR OAKLEY "THE ELEGANT ONE" HALL sits across the desk from Tweed. A feral man in sharp clothes.

HALL
(checking his notes)
... Next we have Murphy from Ward Three.

TWEED
Good man, Murphy. Voted thirty four times in the last election. I believe that's a district record.

HALL
Well, now he wants to be appointed City Inspector.

Tweed begins uncovering more platters. Finds the one he's looking for. Proceeds to devour some braised rabbit.

CONTINUED:

TWEED
What's a City Inspector making this year?

HALL
Salary's four thousand dollars. But with a little initiative and the right connections he could take in about sixty grand.

TWEED
What's he offering us?

HALL
Twenty, plus a percentage.

Tweed drains a wine glass as he considers the offer.

TWEED
Give it to him. I always like to reward loyalty.

Hall makes a note on the paper. He approaches the next subject with hesitation.

HALL
Now Boss, it's been brought to my attention that the re-plastering of the Municipal Building has finally been completed.

TWEED
(smiling)
Took a while didn't it.

HALL
Four and a half years. The original estimate was fifty thousand dollars. The actual cost to the city wound up being one million eight hundred and twenty six thousand.

TWEED
What's your point, Oakley?

HALL
I'm suggesting we be a touch less greedy. At least while your trial's still in progress.

TWEED
Nonsense. The trial's nothing but a mere formality. Without that ledger

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

TWEED (cont'd)
the prosecution has no case against me, and Sammy Tilden knows it.

But Hall is still noticeably uneasy.

HALL
I only hope Silky Sam doesn't have any other ledgers up his sleeve.

Tweed doesn't stop chewing, but his tone is noticeably harder edged.

TWEED
You better hope not, Mr. Mayor. Because if those iron doors ever shut behind me, I promise you I won't be alone.
(a beat)
And you can pass that along to the Governor.

Hall manages a weak smile of acquiescence.

There's a knock at the door and Dandy Johnny Dolan comes sauntering in.

DOLAN
You sent for me, Boss.

TWEED
Come in, John. That'll be all, Oakley.

Hall beats a hasty retreat past Dolan who smirks as the door slams shut.

DOLAN
It's good to see the mayor looking so prosperous.

Tweed holds up a silver candy dish.

TWEED
Some molasses, John?

DOLAN
(refusing)
I'd prefer a sweet job.

TWEED
I think you'll find this to your liking. McGill is still refusing to buy my liquor. Claims my prices are too high. Nervy bastard's trying to organize other bars against me.

CONTINUED:

DOLAN
The arrogance of the man.

TWEED
(sourly)
Next thing you know they'll be bringing unions into the city.

DOLAN
Don't give it another thought. I'll handle the matter personally.

TWEED
That's my boy. Now John, the ledger...

DOLAN
(smiling)
It's safe. I promise you that.

TWEED
Perhaps. But somehow I can't help feeling it would be even safer here.

DOLAN
If not for me those damn Reformers would still have it. And you'd be rotting in the Tombs by now.

Tweed slams the table.

TWEED
And without my protection you'd have been dangling from a rope years ago.

DOLAN
Exactly. Which is why I intend on keeping that darlin' book right where it is.
(smiling)
So I can be sure you never lose your deep affection for me.

A beat and then Tweed begins to chuckle. The laughter builds into a regular roar of mirth. Even Dolan can't help but smile.

TWEED
You're the cock of the walk, John.

DOLAN
That I am.

CONTINUED:

He helps himself to a piece of molasses.

INT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - HICKOK'S ROOM - DAY

Hickok is stretched out on a sofa idly swigging from the champagne bottle.

Cody is twisting the handle of a wall lamp watching the flame rise and fall.

CODY
This gas light sure is a wonder.

HICKOK
It'll be a wonder if you don't burn down the hotel.

Cody shoots him a "who me?" look.

There's a knock at the door. Cody opens it.

A pint-sized MILLER, enters. He's a fast talking, high energy, quintessential New Yorker, with a stogie clamped firmly between his teeth.

MILLER
I'm Miller. Glad to see you boys finally made it.

CODY
Now hold on, you're the one who left us high and dry at the depot.

MILLER
You were supposed to be here two weeks ago.

That stops Cody in his tracks.

CODY
We were?

MILLER
That's right. I even had a couple hundred people waiting to greet you.

Cody smiles at Hickok, relieved that the mystery is finally solved.

CODY
You hear that, Bill? The whole city would have been there.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
(dryly)
That's real comforting.

MILLER
Well you're here now and that's all that counts.

Miller smiles, dollar signs in his eyes as he looks back and forth at his two new stars.

MILLER
Wait until this city gets a load of you. They'll be lining up around the block just to shake hands with the frontier.

CODY
(pleased)
You think so?

MILLER
Guarantee it. Why if you didn't exist we'd have to invent you.

He spots Hickok's pistols from beneath his jacket.

MILLER
I see you brought your own guns. Nice touch.
(a beat)
Now about your clothes...

HICKOK
What about 'em?

MILLER
They're perfect.
(a beat)
But for the stage we need something a little more...heroic.

Before Hickok can reply.

MILLER
Now don't worry, I've already taken care of it.
(checks his pocketwatch)
We better get moving. Rehearsal's at four o'clock. How long is it gonna take you boys to memorize your parts?

CONTINUED:

Hickok and Cody exchange looks. That's a damn good question.

HICKOK
I'd say six months.

CODY
(nodding)
That oughta do it.

Miller laughs. Thinks they're kidding. They're not.

MILLER
You have twenty four hours.
(a beat)
We open tomorrow night.

Hickok and Cody exchange looks. Oh shit!

EXT. THEATRE DISTRICT - AFTERNOON

Fourteenth Street and Union Square. In eighteen-seventy three, the hub of "Broadway" offering a wide variety of entertainment.

The CAMERA PANS by some of the street's most popular theatres, including The Star, which specializes in mustache twirling melodramas, Keith's, which presents "leg shows" (the forerunner of burlesque), and the Fourteenth Street Theatre, currently featuring the distinguished actor Joseph Jefferson as "Rip Van Winkle."

Most of the buildings would seem small and dowdy, if not for the large billboards plastered all around them which trumpet their star attractions.

The CAMERA halts in front of the five story brownstone Metropolitan Hotel.

Adjacent to its front entrance, under an impressive pillared portico, is the doorway to Niblo's Garden Theatre. A billboard reads:

"BUFFALO BILL CODY AND WILD BILL HICKOK in the bloodcurdling Western Drama, "SCOUTS OF THE PLAINS." Also, Four Exquisite DANCES entitled "LOVE'S A BATTLE" or "Fairy Transformations."

INT. NIBLO'S GARDEN THEATRE

An ornate theatre of the day. Bright frescoes of Venus, Cupid and Zeus adorn the ceiling. Busts of Shakespeare, Garrick and Kean reside over the proscenium arch. Hamlet,

CONTINUED:

Othello and Macbeth are depicted in paintings along the wall.

THE STAGE

The usual frenzied activity in preparation for opening night. At the center of the chaos, a group of chorines rehearse a primitive yet ethereal ballet.

THE MAIN AISLE

Hickok and Cody have just entered the theatre. They watch the dancers in bewilderment.

HICKOK
You sure this is the right place?

Miller, carrying a paper bag, comes up behind them.

MILLER
Artistic, ain't they. They're your opening act.

CODY
We go on after them?

MILLER
That's right. First the faeries, then you.

He heads for the stage. They follow.

HICKOK
(not pleased)
You hear that, Will. We go on after the faeries.

BACKSTAGE

Miller stops by a closed door. Signals for Hickok and Cody to wait for him.

MILLER
This'll only take a minute.

He opens the door. A wild-eyed, haggard looking MAN is writing feverishly at a paper strewn desk.

MILLER
How's it coming, Fred?

The man leaps up from the desk and clutches at Miller.

CONTINUED:

FRED
For god's sake, Miller, did you bring it?

Miller hands him the paper bag.

MILLER
Here, calm down.

The man pulls out a bottle of whiskey. With shaking hands he fills a glass and drinks. He refills the glass as he slumps back down at the desk.

FRED
You don't understand, I'll never be finished in time. Never...

Miller gently closes the door.

CODY
Who's that poor devil?

MILLER
He's the playwright.

HICKOK
You mean the play's not even done yet?

MILLER
Don't worry. Fred works best under pressure.
(a beat)
I'll get your costumes and we'll run through what we have.

Hickok scowls at Cody and then turns to find himself face to face with a middle-aged man dressed as an INDIAN CHIEF.

INDIAN CHIEF
(theatrically)
Franklin Meredith at your service, sir. But you may call me Red Eagle. Tell me, are you the Wild one or the Buffalo one?

HICKOK
I'm Bill Hickok.

MEREDITH
An honor.

Meredith puts out his hand. They shake.

CONTINUED:

INDIAN CHIEF
May I just say, I love your hair.

Miller reappears holding up two elaborate buckskins covered with fur trim and embroidered flowers.

MILLER
What do you think? I had them made special.

Hickok looks at the costumes and then back at Meredith.

HICKOK
That tears it.

He storms out of the backstage door.

MILLER
Where's he off to?

CODY
I'll get him back.

Cody follows Hickok.

MILLER
(sourly)
Actors.

CUT TO:

EXT. ACROSS FROM NIBLO'S - MOMENTS LATER

Cody keeps pace with a fuming Hickok.

CODY
Bill, you can't quit now.

Off Hickok's glare.

CODY
Without you there's no show.

HICKOK
Wire Texas Jack. Tell him to buy a new wig.

Cody grabs hold of Hickok's arm. They've stopped in front of McGill's Tavern.

CODY
That ain't gonna work anymore.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Why the hell not?

CODY
(rueful)
Because Miller's never even heard of Texas Jack. He thinks he was hiring you all along.

Hickok reacts in surprise. That's news to him.

INT. MCGILL'S TAVERN - MINUTES LATER

Hickok and Cody are at a corner table. Hickok sits with his back to the wall to give him a clear view of the room.

MCGILL, the pot bellied proprieter, places two mugs of beer in front of them. He's thrilled to have two such noted celebrities in his establishment.

MCGILL
Here you go, gentlemen. On the house.

The beers sit untouched. Hickok's not real happy as Cody struggles to explain their situation.

CODY
It was the only deal Miller would make. See, he believes two heroes will sell more tickets than one.

Cody hopes for a response, but Hickok just waits for him to continue.

CODY
(ruefully)
So, I figured I could pass Texas Jack off as you. You never havin' been East and him wearin' that wig and all. But now that Miller's met you...

Cody stops. Hell, he may as well get to the point.

CODY
The truth is I'm broke, Bill. Don't have a pot to piss in.

HICKOK
What happened to your easy wages?

CODY
Appearing at county fairs? That's pork chop money. But a hundred

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CODY (cont'd)
dollars a week could make a fella rich.
(a beat)
And I know you could use it same as me.

Hickok takes a sip of beer before answering.

HICKOK
Hardly seems fair does it?
(a beat)
Been a lawman most of my life and all I've got to show for it are holes in my pocket and a target on my back.

CODY
Damn right it ain't fair. And here's our chance to get back some of what we're owed. Couldn't have come at a better time.
(a beat)
Louisa's about a month away from making me a daddy.

Hickok lights up at the news.

HICKOK
Well hell Will, congratulations.

CODY
I don't intend for my kid to grow up in some run down prairie shack. Plan on building me a house on some land up around the North Platte. But that's gonna take money, and this play is my only chance of makin' some.

Hickok sighs and takes another sip of beer. He knows he can't refuse his friend.

THE FRONT DOOR

Slams open. In strolls Dolan, Maggie and Slops acting like they own the joint.

DOLAN
A bottle of your best, McGill. For me and my friends.

Dolan is all smiles as he walks up to the bar, his mere presence intimidating the other customers.

CONTINUED:

McGill wearily places a bottle and three glasses in front of Dolan. He tries to move away, but Dolan blocks his path with his cane.

DOLAN
Now don't be running off.

Dolan pours a round for himself and his friends.

DOLAN
We have business to discuss.
(drinks)
The organizing business.

MCGILL
I've nothin' to say to you, Dolan. Or that bloodsuckin' pig you work for.

DOLAN
Well, I've plenty to say to you.

Slops appears behind McGill and shoves him through the door leading to the backroom.

DOLAN
In private, if you don't mind.

They follow McGill inside, closing the door behind them. We hear the SOUNDS of a beating being administered.

HICKOK AND CODY'S TABLE

Cody lays a restraining hand on Hickok's arm.

CODY
Now Bill, we're not looking for trouble, remember.

HICKOK
(agreeing)
This ain't our fight.

They both reach for their beer. The SOUNDS of McGill's battering continue to be heard.

Hickok and Cody are struggling to remain calm.

HICKOK
It'd be different if I was wearin' a badge.

CONTINUED:

CODY
But you're not, so let's just sit here and drink our beer.

Once again, they grab hold of their glasses.

THE FRONT DOOR

Opens and in comes a ten year old girl carrying an empty beer pail. She walks over to the bar as the door to the backroom opens and out piles Dolan, Maggie and Slops. Dolan detours to pick up the bottle from the bar. He bumps into the girl knocking her to the floor.

Hickok is up off his seat before Cody can react.

Dolan turns back towards the front door, only to find Hickok's Colt pointed at his face.

DOLAN
(continuing)
And who might you be?

Cody walks over and opens the backroom door.

McGill lies dead, his head bashed in by Dolan's cane.

HICKOK
I'm the man about to put a bullet in your brain unless you drop that stick.

A beat, and then Dolan laughs uproariously. The rest of his gang joins in.

Hickok looks over at Cody. Are they serious?

But the moment Hickok's eyes stray, Dolan swings at him with his cane. Hickok steps aside and coldcocks Dolan with the barrel of his Colt.

Slops starts toward Hickok. Cody picks up a beer mug and shatters it against Slop's forehead, staggering him. He then breaks a chair over the goon's head, sending him crashing to the floor.

Maggie moves towards Cody who raises his hands, palms outward.

CODY
I never hit a lady.

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE
I'm no lady.

She lifts a hand adorned with metal rings and punches him in the head. Cody goes down, taking a table with him.

Maggie goes after him, but is stopped when Hickok jams his Colt under her chin.

HICKOK
I wouldn't.

Hickok looks over at a stunned Cody who forces himself to sit up.

HICKOK
(to Cody, wryly)
I thought this kind of thing never happens in New York.

Cody's too busy seeing stars to answer.

EXT. TOMBS - EVENING

The original building built in eighteen thirty-eight at Centre and Franklin near Foley Square and City Hall Park (across from where the current Tombs now stand). The foreboding white granite prison was modeled after an Egyptian tomb and contains jail cells, a gallows, and a police station.

Hickok herds Dolan and Slops towards the entrance.

DOLAN
You're fucking with the wrong man, boyo.

Hickok shoves him through the door.

MAGGIE
(to Cody)
I hope I didn't hurt you bad, dearie.

CODY
I'll live.

He holds the door open for her.

MAGGIE
(as she enters)
You're awfully pretty, you know that?

INT. TOMBS

Dank, dark and gloomy.

Hickok stops over by the Desk Sergeant who is in the midst of pouring himself a shot of whiskey.

HICKOK
Who's in charge here?

Dolan addresses the Cop like an old friend.

DOLAN
Hello, Yates.
(re: the liquor)
Don't mind if I do.

The Cop immediately hands the whiskey glass over to Dolan, but Hickok knocks it to the floor.

HICKOK
What the hell you runnin' here, a jail or a saloon?

The Cop is too embarrassed to answer.

MAN (V.O.)
Dandy Johnny Dolan...

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER WILLIAMS, a stocky bruiser with a huge handlebar mustache enters from his office.

WILLIAMS
What a pleasant surprise.

DOLAN
I wouldn't be makin' any special arrangements on our account.
(glaring at Hickok)
We'll be out of here within the hour.

WILLIAMS
(to Cody and Hickok)
I'm Captain Williams. I believe I know who you gentlemen are, and pleased I am to meet you.

He shakes hands with them.

WILLIAMS
Now what's this all about?

CONTINUED:

CODY
Dolan here just murdered the owner of McGill's Tavern.

WILLIAMS
And you arrested him?

HICKOK
Murder's a crime in this city, isn't it?

WILLIAMS
In theory anyway.

He addresses the officers who have just gathered to see what's going on.

WILLIAMS
Take a good look at this you worthless bastards. In case you've forgotten it's called enforcing the law.

Cody looks over at a wall clock. The time reads seven o'clock.

CODY
We gotta move along, Bill.

Hickok looks over at the clock. Nods.

HICKOK
(to Williams)
Talk to the bartender. He saw the whole thing.

They head for the door.

WILLIAMS
Wait. What's the hurry?

CODY
We have to get back.

He exits.

WILLIAMS
Back where?

Hickok stops at the door, looks back at Williams.

HICKOK
The theatre.

CONTINUED:

He leaves.

A confused Williams looks over at a snickering Dolan.

CUT TO:

EXT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

Re-establish.

INT. HICKOK'S ROOM

Hickok paces around mumbling to himself as he tries to memorize his lines. He keeps glancing over at Cody who sits at the table carefully writing a letter.

HICKOK
I wish you'd stop that scribbling.

CODY
I can't help it if I miss Louisa.

Cody smiles tenderly at a cartes de vistes (a postcard sized photograph) propped up in front of him. Louisa, a young raven haired beauty, stares timidly at the camera.

Hickok, tired of fighting a losing battle with the script, tosses it away and sits on the couch.

HICKOK
Must be nice to miss a woman.

CODY
You oughta try it some time.

HICKOK
Never met one worth the bother.

CODY
That's cause you only associate with whores.

HICKOK
I like whores.
(a beat)
Only trouble is you don't miss 'em.

Hickok picks up the script.

HICKOK
How much time we have left?

CONTINUED:

Cody consults his pocket watch.

CODY
Show begins in three hours.

HICKOK
My guess is you'll be seein' Louisa again before you know it.

CODY
How you figure?

Hickok holds up the script.

HICKOK
We start spoutin' this nonsense and they're gonna ride us out of town on a rail.
(a beat)
Unless, of course, they hang us first.

Hickok goes back to studying his lines. But now he's got Cody worried. Just what the hell has he gotten them into.

INT. NIBLO'S GARDEN THEATRE - EVENING

As the sell-out crowd files in. The gentry can be found in the orchestra seats and private proscenium boxes which go for seventy five cents a ticket. The common folk are situated in the two galleries (fifty and twenty-five cents) in back of the theatre.

Tilden and Bennett are among the sell out crowd making their way to their seats. They meet and greet a steady stream of well wishers, though Tilden remains his usual reserved self even while pressing the flesh.

BACKSTAGE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Onstage, the "Love's Battle" dance is finishing up as Hickok comes out of his dressing room to be met by Cody. They're both dressed in their ridiculous buckskin costumes.

CODY
You look positively epic.

HICKOK
I feel like a damn jackass. We're parading more frills than a couple of Hays City whores.

Just then a group of Chorines from "Love's Battle" come offstage. Each with a come hither smile for our heroes as they pass by.

CONTINUED:

Cody finds the invitation alluring, but instead he slips Louisa's photo from his jacket. He smiles at her picture and, having resisted temptation, carefully places it back in his pocket.

The house lights dim. Miller, chomping on a stogie, rushes over.

MILLER
All right you prairie heroes, it's showtime. Now go out there and make me proud.

CODY
Mr. Miller, we have a little problem.

MILLER
How little?

HICKOK
We don't know our lines.

MILLER
(unconcerned)
Relax. You can make 'em up as you go along.

CODY
We can?

MILLER
Those folks are here to see heroes, not actors. Just go out there and be yourselves.

CODY
(trying to sound confident)
We can do that.
(to Hickok)
Can't we?

At that moment, neither seems too sure.

A Stagehand tugs on a rope pulley to open the curtain.

THE STAGE

Applause as the curtain rises.

A garishly painted backdrop of the Western plains.

A pretty ACTRESS (Pale Dove), using the declamatory acting style of the period, stands wringing her hands in fear beside an incredibly phony campfire.

CONTINUED:

ACTRESS (PALE DOVE)
Oh woe is me, my people, the fearsome Sioux have taken to the warpath again. I must warn the valiant troopers at Fort Kearney.
(approaching footsteps)
Hark, who goes there?

Cody enters from the wings and is met with thunderous applause. For a moment, he is overwhelmed, but he quickly grows to love it.

ACTRESS (PALE DOVE)
Why it's Buffalo Bill, Knight of the Frontier.

THE WINGS

Hickok is surprised by the audience's reaction. Sensing someone nearby he turns to discover Franklin Meredith (dressed as Red Eagle) standing beside him. Meredith smiles. Hickok quickly looks away.

THE STAGE

Cody's doing the best he can with this acting business.

CODY
I bring good news Pale Dove. Wild Bill, that intrepid Odysseus of the West has pledged to meet me here this very day.

BACKSTAGE

Miller pats Hickok on the shoulder.

MILLER
That's your cue.

HICKOK
My what?

MILLER
Get out there.

He pushes him toward -

THE STAGE

A Stagehand positioned in the gallery uses a calcium flare LIMELIGHT to spot Hickok's entrance. The audience greets him with the same enthusiasm they lavished on Cody.

CONTINUED:

CODY
Why here he is now.

Disoriented and squinting from the glare of the limelight. Hickok walks right past his fellow performers.

ACTRESS (PALE DOVE)
And there he goes.

CODY
Tell us, Bill, have you spotted the hostile's trail?

But Hickok can only squint out at the audience.

HICKOK
I can't see anything with that damn light in my eyes.

The audience laughs in appreciation of Hickok's honesty.

The limelight is turned off. Cody looks to cover for his friend. He comforts Pale Dove with a chaste embrace.

CODY
Fear not, fair maid. By heavens, you are safe with Buffalo Bill who is ever ready to risk his life and die if need be in defense of weak and defenseless womanhood.

Hickok looks over at Cody.

HICKOK
What kind of silly shit is that?

The audience laughs louder in agreement. Cody tries to incorporate Hickok's ad-lib into the show.

CODY
What's this? A lesson in romance from my rugged companion.

But Hickok's not buying it.

HICKOK
You call that romance? I'm gonna have to talk to your wife.

He grabs Pale Dove away from Cody.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Now this is romance.

He kisses her passionately. The audience loves it.

Cody finally pulls Hickok and Pale Dove apart.

CODY
I ask you again, old friend. Have you seen any injuns.

But before Hickok can answer.

INT. THEATRE DOORS

As they're flung open and Agnes Lake comes charging down the aisle on her white stallion and executes a spectacular leap onto --

THE STAGE

Where she halts her steed alongside our two very surprised heroes. Hickok grins up at her and is again met with a heart-stopping smile. Agnes turns and hands Cody a note.

AGNES
A message for you from General Carr.

She then wheels the horse so she can speak directly to the theatre audience.

AGNES
(continuing)
And don't forget to bring the entire family to see Agnes Lake's Hippo-Olympiad and Mammoth Circus.

The horse rears up on his hind legs and then heads off into the wings.

The audience applauds loudly as Hickok grins in admiration.

HICKOK
Does she do that every night?

ACTRESS (PALE DOVE)
(a jealous whisper)
No, Mr. Miller's just allowing her some free publicity.

HICKOK
Too bad.

CONTINUED:

He follows her into the wings. Cody can't believe it.

CODY
Bill?

BACKSTAGE

Agnes dismounts and hands the horse's reins over to an assistant. She's putting a cloak over her costume as Hickok approaches.

HICKOK
Pardon me, ma'am. We met briefly the other day ... at the parade.

AGNES
(cordial, but distant)
You're Mr. ...Cody?

HICKOK
Hickok. I was wondering if we could meet after the show.

AGNES
You're the gunman.

HICKOK
(not proud of it)
I've been called such.

AGNES
Have you ever been in Missouri, Mr. Hickok?

HICKOK
Often.

AGNES
In eighteen sixty-nine my husband was murdered by a gunman in Missouri.

And she exits out the backstage door.

Hickok searches his memory. Is it possible that he really killed her husband? Then suddenly remembering...

HICKOK
(calling after her)
I was in Kansas in eighteen sixty-nine.

Cody comes up beside him.

CONTINUED:

CODY
So was I, but it ain't worth bragging about.

He leads Hickok back out to

THE STAGE

The audience applauds Hickok's return.

CODY
The General wishes to know the location of the Redskin's camp.

HICKOK
Beats me.

CODY
Perhaps a slug of old tanglefoot will jar your memory.

He pulls out a bottle that he hands to Hickok.

HICKOK
Sure couldn't hurt.

Hickok pulls out the cork and takes a mighty slug. He immediately sprays it all over the stage.

HICKOK
Goddamn it Will, that's tea.

The audience roars.

CODY
(sotto voce)
You've got to pretend otherwise.

HICKOK
I'm not pretending anything until I get some real whiskey.

Cody looks helplessly offstage.

CODY
I believe we have another jug somewhere.

DOLAN (V.O.)
Here you go, boyo.

THE AUDIENCE

Sure enough, Dolan, Maggie and Slops are seated in the first row. Dolan tosses a bottle of whiskey on stage.

DOLAN
With my compliments.

THE STAGE

Hickok catches the bottle.

THE AUDIENCE

Dolan gives them an arrogant grin.

THE STAGE

Neither Hickok nor Cody can believe he's there.

Meanwhile the audience, most of them unaware it's Dolan, are loving every minute of this.

The SCOUTS OF THE PLAINS is a hit.

BACKSTAGE - LATER

The show's over and half the audience is backstage trying to get a closer look at their heroes.

An exuberant Miller has his arms around them.

MILLER
That bit with the tea. Sensational. I want it kept in. Every night we'll have someone from the audience toss you up a bottle of the real stuff.

CODY
(cheerfully surprised)
They seem to like us all right.

MILLER
Like you? Are you kidding? This show will run forever.
(a beat)
Why we'll have the whole East Coast wearing buckskin before we're through.

Miller slaps them on the back and goes off to greet some well-wishers.

CONTINUED:

CODY
(to Hickok; grinning)
I told you we'd dazzle 'em.

HICKOK
(scowling)
Don't it bother you even a little bit the way Dolan just waltzed out of jail?

CODY
I'll admit it's a touch peculiar.

Tilden and Bennett make their way through the crowd.

BENNETT
Cody ... Will Cody.

CODY
(suprised and pleased)
Mr. Bennett!

They shake hands.

BENNETT
By God, that was the jim dandiest theatrical I've ever seen.
(making the introductions)
Samuel Tilden, meet my good friend the legendary frontiersman, Buffalo Bill Cody. Cody was our guide during my recent hunting expedition out west. A brave and gallant gentleman.

They shake.

BENNETT
I'm giving a little dinner party next week and I'd be honored if your entire troupe would attend.

CODY
Be our pleasure.
(placing an arm around Hickok)
And while you're here allow me to introduce Wild Bill Hickok who's even braver and more gallant than I am. Bill, meet James Gordon Bennett, Jr., owner of the "New York Herald". And his friend Sam Tilden.

CONTINUED:

Both men are impressed to meet the fabled Hickok, though Tilden's attitude is, as always, condescending.

TILDEN
You wear quite a reputation, Mr. Hickok.

HICKOK
Sometimes I don't know if I'm wearing it, or it's wearing me.

TILDEN
Nevertheless, this city owes both of you a debt of gratitude.

CODY
(modestly)
I almost keeled over when I first walked on stage.

TILDEN
I was referring to your apprehension of Dandy John Dolan.

HICKOK
He didn't stay apprehended long.

TILDEN
That's not surprising given his political connections. Incidentally, you two are going to need a lawyer. I'd be honored...

CODY
Hold on, we ain't the one's need a lawyer.

BENNETT
(regretfully)
I'm afraid you do. It seems Mr. Dolan has brought suit against you for false arrest.

Hickok and Cody can't believe what they're hearing.

CODY
False arrest? There must have been a half dozen witnesses who saw Dolan stab McGill.

BENNETT
No one saw anything. At least that's what they're saying. They're too scared of Dolan to say otherwise.

CONTINUED:

TILDEN
It's your word against his. Which could wind up costing you a good deal of money.

HICKOK
(to Cody)
What the hell kind of peckerwood town is this?

For once Cody's at a loss for words.

BENNETT
It's a frightened town, Mr. Hickok. We're hoping you and Cody can help change that.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Champagne glasses sit forgotten as Hickok and Cody react to Tilden and Bennett's proposal.

BENNETT
So you see gentlemen, this trial could be our only chance to bring Tweed and the rest of his Tammany Hall cronies to justice.

TILDEN
I've managed to obtain a postponement for another week. But unless you can recover that ledger we're going to lose.

CODY
You're sure Dolan has it?

BENNETT
That's what our informants tell us.

TILDEN
It's simply a matter of going down to Five Points and getting it.

HICKOK
If it's so simple how come you need us.

BENNETT
The police are reluctant to enter the Five Points district. Getting in is often easier than getting...

CONTINUED:

Tilden tosses a packet of money on the table.

TILDEN
Five hundred dollars. That's what I'm offering each of you for the ledger.

Hickok and Cody glance down at the money, but neither man makes a move towards it.

HICKOK
And how would you suggest we do that? Walk in there and shoot up the place until they hand it over?

TILDEN
I expect you to do whatever's necessary. Or are those guns you wear only for show.

Hickok and Cody exchange looks. Neither of them cares much for this Tilden fella.

HICKOK
Mr. Tilden, I don't hunt where I don't know the territory.

Cody, determined to give Tilden a hard time, tries to up the ante.

CODY
It ain't like we need the work. Gettin' paid pretty good as is. Less chance of getting killed, too.

Tilden lobs another packet onto the table.

TILDEN
All right then, a thousand dollars.

No response. Tilden is rapidly running out of patience. He throws down another bundle.

TILDEN
Two thousand.

Just stares. More money is flung down.

TILDEN
All right, five thousand.

CONTINUED:

CODY
(to Hickok)
Kinda makes a fella wonder how deep them pockets go.

Hickok mulls it over.

HICKOK
Five thousand. That's a fair price.

TILDEN
(patronizing)
I quite agree.

HICKOK
Only one problem.

TILDEN
And what would that be?

A long beat as Hickok approaches Tilden. When he speaks, it's with a quiet, deadly calm.

HICKOK
I don't like you. And I sure as hell don't like this piss poor excuse of a town. So if you want that damn ledger so bad, you can buy one of Mr. Colt's equalizers and get it yourself.

And with that he walks out of the room. Bennett and an apoplectic Tilden are left staring at Cody who smiles cheerfully.

CODY
Glad you fellas could stop by.

He walks over to Tilden and shoves some tickets into his hand.

CODY
Here's some free passes to hand out to your friends.

INT. HICKOK'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Hickok awakes. He reaches under his pillow and pulls out one of his Colts. Places it on the nightstand next to an empty bottle of whiskey. He glances over to the other side of the bed where the Actress (Pale Dove) snores softly. A gun, some liquor, and a woman he hardly knows - it's a typical morning for Hickok. And one that brings him little comfort. He gets out of bed, looking tired and lonely.

INT. CODY'S HOTEL ROOM - A HALF HOUR LATER

From the street we hear the SOUND OF GUNFIRE. Cody rushes from the bathroom, pulling on his jacket.

INT. HICKOK'S HOTEL ROOM

Cody comes in through the connecting door.

CODY
Bill?

No one there. Follow Cody into:

THE BEDROOM

The Actress (Pale Dove) is still asleep. The gunfire continues.

CODY
Shit.

EXT. ALLEY LEDGE BEHIND THE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

A row of bottles lined up on the ledge EXPLODE in a hail of gunfire. When the fusillade is over, there's not a bottle left standing.

Hickok stands at the other end of the alley, his guns still smoking.

Hickok sets himself for a go at a second row of bottles. Suddenly, the sun bursts through the clouds. He reacts in pain to the light.

Now he takes the time to aim carefully as he shoots at the bottles. Still, he misses a few of the targets.

Frowning, he squints up at the sky.

HICKOK
Goddamn sun's brighter here than in Kansas.

Cody comes running out of the hotel.

CODY
Bill, what the hell are you doin'?

HICKOK
(reloading)
Never missed a day's practice in my life. Don't see any reason to stop now.

ALLEY ENTRANCE

Captain Williams enters from the street.

WILLIAMS
(friendly)
Well, for one thing there's a law against the discharging of firearms within city limits.

HICKOK
Law don't seem to amount to much around here.

WILLIAMS
I'm sorry about what happened yesterday. I'd nail the jail house door shut if I thought it would keep the vermin inside.
(a beat)
Now if you want to continue target practice I suggest taking a ride up to Central Park.
(eyeing Hickok's guns)
You can shoot those fine looking weapons all you want in there.

Hickok hands one over.

HICKOK
Eighteen fifty one Colt. Converted them last year from cap and ball to thirty caliber rimfire cartridge. Good balance. Minimum recoil.

Williams hands back the gun.

WILLIAMS
You may have need of them before too long.

CODY
Dolan?

WILLIAMS
(nodding)
He's got a score to settle with you boys. And I doubt a lawsuit's gonna satisfy him.
(a beat)
I'd keep those loaded if I were you.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Always do.

ALLEY ENTRANCE

A group of reporters come swarming in.

REPORTERS
Mr. Cody... Mr. Hickok.

In the lead is a gangly YOUTH with wire rim glasses.

YOUTH
I'm Johnson of "The Herald." We'd sure appreciate an interview.

CODY
Always willing to oblige the press.

Unhappy with this latest distraction, and pissed off by his erratic marksmanship, Hickok heads out of the alley.

CODY
Bill, don't you have anything to say to these fine reporters.

Hickok passes the ledge and angrily knocks the rest of the bottles to the ground.

HICKOK
(looking back at reporters)
Next time stay out of my line of fire.

Cody looks to smooth things over with the reporters.

CODY
Boys, have you ever heard about the time Wild Bill and I saved General Custer at the Battle of Washita?

The reporters eagerly close the ranks around Cody.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON HICKOK'S EYE

staring wide.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
How long have your eyes been bothering you, Mr. Hickok?

INT. EYE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Hickok is seated in an old wooden chair as the DOCTOR examines his eyes.

HICKOK
About a year.

The Doctor steps back, writes something down in a journal.

HICKOK
(continuing)
Now there's no need to go easy on me, doc.

DOCTOR
You appear to be suffering from a severe case of Trachoma.
(off Hickok's look)
Scarring of the cornea.

HICKOK
Don't sound too good, does it?

DOCTOR
You have all the symptoms. Pain. Recurrent attacks of cloudy vision. Extreme sensitivity to light.

HICKOK
Am I goin' blind, Doc?

The Doctor hands Hickok a pair of round blue-tinted wire rimmed glasses.

DOCTOR
These spectacles should help protect your eyes from any harsh glare.

HICKOK
You didn't answer my question.

DOCTOR
Wear the glasses, Mr. Hickok. It's the best I can do.

A stoic Hickok nods. It's what he expected.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A BLIND CIVIL WAR VETERAN stands begging on the street. Hickok, looking very self-conscious in his new glasses, comes out of the building. He removes the glasses, stares

CONTINUED:

at them thoughtfully, then notices the vet standing nearby.

Hickok tosses a coin in his cup and then covers the vet's eyes with the glasses.

The veteran touches the glasses.

VETERAN
Thank you. Thank you kindly.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

Opened for less than ten years, the park is somewhat more picturesque than we're accustomed to. Wild flowers are in abundance, and off in the distance, squatters live in shacks and tend to their crops and livestock.

EXT. THE LAKE

Near what is today the Seventy-Second Street entrance. A brooding Hickok sits in the shade of a tree shooting at a row of rocks. Though he hits what he aims at, his mood remains somber.

MAN (V.O.)
Mighty pretty country.

Hickok looks up. It's Cody.

CODY
For a city.

HICKOK
How'd you find me?

CODY
Followed your tracks.

HICKOK
You are one keen eyed son of a bitch.

CODY
Wasn't that hard, really. Figured you'd take Captain Williams' advice. I just followed the sound of gunshots.
(a beat)
I came to give you this.

He hands Hickok a cardboard pass.

HICKOK
Train ticket west.

CONTINUED:

CODY
It was never my intention to make you feel foolish. I'm sorry, Bill.

HICKOK
What about the show?

CODY
I'll figure something out.

Hickok stands up and they begin to walk around the lake. Instead of cheering him up, the train ticket seems to have made Hickok even more dour.

CODY
So where do you plan on heading? Ellsworth? Topeka? Cheyenne?

A beat. This isn't easy for Hickok to admit.

HICKOK
Truth is, I can't think of any place I'd be welcome.

CODY
What the hell's that mean?

HICKOK
It means that ever since I put the badge down, there ain't a town from Kansas to the Wyoming Territory that wants any part of me.
(off Cody's look)
They claim trouble has a way of following me around.

CODY
What about Hays City? Or Abilene? Those towns would still be wide open if you hadn't tamed 'em.

HICKOK
Appears I did my job too well. Now they got themselves an image to maintain and I guess I don't fit the picture.

He hands the ticket back to Cody.

HICKOK
(continuing)
So if it's all the same to you, I'll stay around here awhile longer.

CONTINUED:

Cody nods, glad Hickok's staying, but acknowledging the hard truth in what he's said.

CUT TO:

EXT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - A FEW DAYS LATER

Hickok and Cody come out of the hotel on their way to grab some lunch. Cody is reading a copy of "Dewitt's Ten Cent Romances," a dime novel, with a woodcut of Hickok and Cody on the cover. The title reads, "Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill: Friends to the Rescue."

CODY
I thought I was one for spinning yarns. But these ten cent books are nothin' but hogwash and hokum.

HICKOK
Then why waste money buyin' that trash?

CODY
I like readin' about us.
(a beat)
Besides, I can afford 'em. We've been playin' to a packed house every night this week.

They pass a landau parked at the curb. The door opens and Slops leans out, a thirty two caliber Smith and Wesson (the nineteenth century version of a Saturday Night Special) pointed straight at them.

SLOPS
Pardon me, gents, but the Boss requests the pleasure of your company.

CODY
What do you say, Bill? Ain't everyday a fella gets an invite to meet the Boss of New York.

Hickok nods. Cody climbs past Slops into the landau. Slops still has the gun pointed at Hickok as he enters the vehicle.

HICKOK
Put away the popgun, sonny, before someone shoves it up your ass and blows your brains out.

CONTINUED:

Slops puts away the gun before closing the door. The landau pulls out into the street.

EXT. FIVE POINTS - DAY

Drunks lay slumped along the gutter. Sickly looking whores loom in every other doorway, their faces outlined in stark white powder to stand out in the perpetual gloom.

Thugs, many carrying weapons, loiter in the road waiting for some poor unfortunate soul to stumble by.

EXT. THE LANDAU

The center of attention as it passes along.

INT. LANDAU

Both Hickok and Cody are thinking that Hell Town in Abilene was never this bad.

The landau comes to a halt.

EXT. DOLAN'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A dismal, three story brick building without sign post or sign of life.

Slops hops out of the carriage followed by Hickok and Cody.

SLOPS
He's waiting inside.

He follows them through the door.

SALOON HEADQUARTERS

A large room capable of holding several hundred people. The crowd is a mixture of whores, low lifes and affluent businessmen with a taste for danger and degradation.

Along two walls are rows of curtained boxes reserved for private parties. Across from the front door, a huge bar runs almost the width of the building.

To the left of the bar, a passageway runs to the back of the building.

To the right, a stairway leads to a balcony containing cribs, (bedrooms) where the whores conduct most of their business.

INT. ENTRANCE WAY

As Hickok, Cody and Slops make their way through the roisterers.

A saucy HARLOT with a rather prominent proboscis grabs hold of Cody.

HARLOT
Hello, honey. They call me Big Nose Alice. How about goin' upstairs and showin' me what's under that fringe?

Hell Cat Maggie comes up behind her, pulling her away.

MAGGIE
Sorry dearie, but I saw him first.

Maggie tries to attach herself to Cody, but Alice grabs her by the hair.

ALICE
Like hell you did.

Maggie twists around, grabbing hold of Alice's throat and propels both of them over a table, scattering a bunch of deadbeats who immediately come to life.

DEADBEAT
(gleeful)
Fight! Fight!

The fight call spreads throughout the room and soon everyone is clustered around the combatants.

THE BACK PASSAGEWAY

Tweed, Dolan and some other big spenders come racing out and push their way through the crowd.

THE RING

where Maggie and Alice have wrestled themselves to their feet and are clawing the hell out of each other's face.

TWEED
A hundred dollars on Maggie.

BIG SPENDER
I'll take it.

Bets are shouted out all around the room.

CONTINUED:

Cody moves to stop the fighting, but Slops digs the pistol into his side.

Alice knocks Maggie down, but Maggie kicks Alice in the stomach, grabs hold of her hair and bangs her head against the floor. They grapple around on the ground until Maggie finally pins Alice. Alice struggles to throw her off.

Maggie opens her mouth, revealing those sharpened teeth and bites down for all she's worth on Alice's snout.

Alice screams bloody murder as Maggie tears off the tip of her nose.

Alice continues to shriek as Hickok pulls a handkerchief out of some robber baron's breast pocket.

He hands it to Alice who tries to stop the fountain of blood gushing from her face.

Maggie stands and spits her prize onto the floor amidst loud cheers. Only Hickok and Cody seem to disapprove of what has just taken place. Maggie gives Cody a crimson dripped smile of triumph as her rival stumbles upstairs to her room.

MAGGIE
I guess she's just plain Alice now.

Maggie moves towards Cody. She's stopped by Tweed who shoves his winnings down the front of her dress.

TWEED
You've earned a little celebration.

Maggie knows better than to argue. She drifts off.

TWEED
(continuing)
William Tweed at your service, gentlemen. I believe you already know Mr. Dolan.

CODY
We've met.

TWEED
He was just telling me how deeply he regrets yesterday's unfortunate altercation. Isn't that correct, John?

CONTINUED:

DOLAN
It's true, I have a bad temper.

TWEED
I've sent a rather large check to the Widow McGill as a token of our deepest sympathy.

HICKOK
That's real touching.

DOLAN
The Boss is a generous man.

TWEED
John's also decided to take my advice and drop his lawsuit against you.

Tweed pauses for a response from Hickok and Cody, but they remain impassive. He forges ahead, three hundred pounds of determined good cheer.

TWEED
(continuing)
So you see, there's nothing to prevent us from being the best of friends. Now is there anything we can get you?

Tweed beckons them across the room.

THE PRIVATE BOXES

He opens one of the curtains.

A group of naked whores sit waiting around a table.

TWEED
A woman perhaps?

No response, so Tweed moves to the next partition and sweeps it aside, revealing a trio of thirteen year olds dressed in flimsy shifts.

TWEED
(continuing)
Or a girl?

Still no response. Dolan pulls back the next curtain.

DOLAN
If it's a boy you'd be wanting, we have those as well.

CONTINUED:

A rather well-to-do old man is holding a wine glass to the lips of a hollow-eyed boy.

There are no takers, so Dolan lets the curtain drop back down.

TWEED
Well then, that leaves us only one alternative.
(smiling)
Lunch.

THE BALCONY - LATER

A table overlooking the bar. Hickok and Cody, having finished their meal, are puffing on large cigars. Tweed continues to stuff his face.

Down below, Dolan, infuriated he was not invited to join them, shoots baleful looks in their direction.

CODY
This sure is a fine cigar.

TWEED
That's a five dollar Havana. Best there is.

He spears a piece of meat off a plate. Gobbles it down.

TWEED
You should try the ox tail, Mr. Hickok. It's choice.

But watching Tweed devour everything in sight has put Hickok off his feed.

HICKOK
Some other time.

TWEED
Gentlemen, I'll make this brief. I have a job I'd like you to do for me. Pays ten thousand dollars. A piece.

Hickok and Cody exchange looks. The job offers keep coming in.

CODY
That is a consequential sum of money.

CONTINUED:

TWEED
It certainly is.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out two thick stacks of bills that he places in front of them.

TWEED
My trial is scheduled to resume in a few days. Before that happens I want you to retrieve a certain item that belongs to me. It's hidden somewhere in this very building.

HICKOK
This item, it wouldn't happen to be a ledger.

TWEED
(laughing)
You're way ahead of me, Mr. Hickok.

CODY
That sure is a popular book.

HICKOK
(to Tweed)
I thought you and Dolan were partners.

TWEED
We are.

HICKOK
What if he won't give it back?

TWEED
(smiling)
One can always find another partner.
(a beat)
I've tried to raise John's place in the world. But he was born on these streets and I'm afraid he's destined to die here.

Tweed uncovers yet another food platter.

TWEED
(ecstasy)
Pickled lobster.
(breathing the aroma)
Ambrosia.

Places a heaping portion on his plate.

CONTINUED:

TWEED
When I think of all those years you've spent toiling away on the side of the Angels. And for what? What has it gotten you? Nothing. But with ten thousand dollars you can do anything you want, have anything you want. This city will spread its legs wide open for a man with money.

He pauses to guzzle down some claret then wolfs down more of the lobster.

TWEED
(a satisfied smile)
Ten thousand dollars. You've killed men for considerably less, haven't you, Mr. Hickok. Surely you have no qualms over cutting a few more notches in your pistol. After all it is how you make your living.

Hickok has had about enough. He leans over the table until he is only inches away from Tweed.

HICKOK
Mr. Tweed, I make my living at Niblo's Theatre. Before that I was an officer of the law. As for killin', I never developed your taste for it.
(a beat)
But then again, I don't have your appetite.

And with that Hickok walks away.

Tweed forces himself to remain calm as he moves Hickok's stack of bills next to Cody's.

TWEED
Your friend is an idiot, Mr. Cody. I hope you'll be more reasonable.

Cody picks up the two piles of greenbacks, stares at them longingly.

CODY
I always thought I was.

He takes the money and flings it off the balcony. The money floats down into the room below. Chaos breaks out as customers scramble for the bills. Tweed is stunned.

CONTINUED:

Cody leans over and crushes his cigar into Tweed's plate of pickled lobster.

CODY
Guess I was wrong.

THE STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

As Hickok and Cody walk down the balcony watching the fights raging over the scattered cash.

CODY
A real shame, ain't it?
(off Hickok's look)
Fella could get used to smoking five dollar cigars.

HICKOK
I'll buy you one.

They head out the door.

THE BALCONY

Dolan comes racing up the stairs to find a coldly furious Tweed pouring himself another glass of claret.

DOLAN
You mind telling me what in the hell is going on?

TWEED
Our frontier guests need to be hurt, John. And I believe I know how we can do it.

He sips his drink, oblivious to the riot raging below.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - A WOODED CARRIAGE PATH - THE NEXT DAY

Hickok, driving a buggy.

EXT. THE GREAT LAWN

The buggy comes out of the woods into the large green field near today's Seventy-Ninth Street entrance.

THE CIRCUS

It's temporary headquarters is spread out along the other side of the clearing.

THE BUGGY

Hickok reins in the horses and hops down. He starts across the field.

THE CLEARING

Agnes, in costume, lifts herself onto her stallion.

The horse trots for a few yards and then bursts into a gallop.

Hickok watches admiringly.

Suddenly, Agnes loses her grip on the stallion's mane. She falls backward, one foot caught in the stirrup. The horse's speed increases, Agnes hanging on for dear life, hovering just above the passing ground.

Hickok reacts immediately. He races over to a small herd of circus horses, leaps into a saddle, and races after Agnes.

THE CHASE

Hickok whips the horse with his reins, desperately trying to catch up to Agnes.

Agnes' head is inches away from her stallion's pounding hooves.

Hickok slowly gains ground.

Agnes' stallion turns left, enabling Hickok to close the gap.

Hickok's horse moves alongside the stallion.

Hickok leans down on the saddle, grabs at Agnes. Misses.

The stallion tries to pull away, but Hickok swings back up on his horse and comes closer once more.

Again Hickok leans over and grasps at Agnes. This time he manages to get an arm around her shoulder. Slowly, he lifts her up enabling her to leap onto the back of his horse.

Hickok heaves on the reins and they come to a stop. Agnes jumps to the ground as Hickok swings out of the saddle.

HICKOK
Are you all...

CONTINUED:

She slaps his face.

AGNES
Are you trying to get me killed?

Hickok's surprised and angry.

HICKOK
You don't need my help for that.

Suddenly Agnes understands.

AGNES
You thought I was really in danger?

HICKOK
You ever see anyone trampled by a horse?

To Hickok's astonishment, Agnes breaks into a laugh.

HICKOK
(continuing)
I don't see what's so damn funny.

AGNES
Haven't you ever heard of a Mazeppa?
(no response)
The woman on the runaway horse.
(off Hickok's stare)
I was rehearsing my act.

HICKOK
You do this for a living?

AGNES
Three shows a day.

A beat. Hickok grins.

HICKOK
You're pretty damn good.

EXT. THE CIRCUS - LATER

Hickok and Agnes watch some clowns rehearse a tumbling routine. Agnes is feeding carrots to her stallion.

AGNES
I've been running the business ever since my husband was shot...
(before Hickok can protest)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGNES (cont'd)
By a man named Jack Killian.

HICKOK
Must be a rough life for a woman.

AGNES
I've managed to keep us in the black.
(studying Hickok)
Exactly what brought you out here today, Mr. Hickok?

HICKOK
I was hoping you'd accompany me to Mr. Bennett's party tomorrow night.

AGNES
Mr. Miller has already extended me an invitation.

The RINGMASTER waves at them from a distance.

RINGMASTER
Agnes, we're ready for you.

AGNES
Coming.

HICKOK
Then you'll be there?

AGNES
A chance to mingle with New York's lace stocking set? I wouldn't miss it.

She swings up onto her horse. Hickok admires her as she rides off. A picture of style and grace.

CUT TO:

INT. NIBLO'S THEATRE - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

A stage crew is cleaning up the debris left over from the night's performance.

INT. MILLER'S OFFICE

Miller, dressed for Bennett's party, is dividing stacks of money into three piles and placing them into envelopes.

THE OFFICE DOOR

is flung open. Dolan, Maggie, Slops and a few others saunter in.

DOLAN
We're here about an audition.

Miller starts to rise. Maggie and the others beat him to the floor. Dolan picks up the money envelopes. Smiles as he listens to the SOUNDS of the BEATING.

DOLAN
How do you like us so far?

INT. BENNETT'S MANSION - EVENING

Cody, half drunk and holding an empty champagne glass, is in the midst of regaling Bennett and a wealthy ELDERLY COUPLE with one of his stories.

CODY
... So there was Bill, bowie knife covered with gore, locked in mortal combat with Jake McKlandess. Just then, out of the corner of my eye, I see one of them sneakin' bushwhackers creep up behind Bill, ready to blow his head off. Well quick as a flash I finish off the two desperadoes in front of me, and then...

A waiter passes by carrying a tray of drinks. Cody swipes one of them. Swallows it down.

CODY
(continuing)
... I turn and drill three biscuits into that dry gulching scoundrel. And that's how I saved the life of the best friend a man could have, Wild Bill Hickok.

It takes a moment for his audience to respond, so enthralled have they been by his tale.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN
Splendid.

BENNETT
Didn't I tell you?

CONTINUED:

ELDERLY WOMAN
But what happened to that awful McKlandess person?

CODY
Well, Bill got tired of waltzing around with him, so he sliced his head clean off his shoulders.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN
By god, I wish I could have been there.

CODY
It was epic.

He takes another glass of champagne from a passing waiter.

THE BAR

A bored Hickok stands sipping whiskey.

He's approached by a GUEST.

GUEST
Excuse me, Mr. Hickok. Is it true you've killed over a hundred men?

HICKOK
(nodding)
Truth is a day doesn't go by without me blasting someone.

GUEST
You mean you've shot someone today?

Hickok ominously reaches for his gun.

HICKOK
Not yet.

The guest hurries away O.S.. Hickok smiles thinly to himself. Cody and Bennett approach.

BENNETT
Cody's been telling me how successful your show's been doing.

CODY
Packed houses every night.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Just no accounting for people's taste.

Tilden walks by them, icily ignoring Hickok and Cody.

HICKOK
(continuing; to Bennett)
I've been reading about the trial in the papers.

BENNETT
Two more days and Tweed walks out of the courthouse a free man.

CODY
Doesn't say much for the future of this city.

BENNETT
No, I'm afraid it doesn't.

Bennett is called away. Hickok brightens considerably as he spots Agnes coming towards him. She looks radiant.

HICKOK
(continuing)
Am I glad to see you.

AGNES
Haven't you been enjoying yourself?

HICKOK
Not hardly. But I plan to make up for lost time.

Cody bows to Agnes.

CODY
William Frederick Cody at your service, ma'am.

HICKOK
Don't mind him, he's just lonely for his wife.

AGNES
That's sweet.

Hickok takes her arm and they begin to stroll the room.

AGNES
I take it you don't have a family of your own.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
Most of the women I know ain't much for settling down.

AGNES
Why's that?

HICKOK
I guess because most of 'em are, what you'd call, ladies of ill repute.

AGNES
You mean prostitutes?

HICKOK
As a rule, I've found 'em to be straightforward and honest, like yourself.

AGNES
(sarcastic)
What a charming comparison.

HICKOK
(realizes)
Hell, I didn't mean...

Agnes walks off. Cody steps up beside Hickok.

CODY
You gonna just let her walk off like that?

HICKOK
Don't see how I can stop her.

CODY
You gotta romance a woman, 'specially after insultin' 'em.

HICKOK
Is that a fact.

CODY
Buy her flowers. Or better yet, take her to a fancy restaurant.
(a beat)
They love to eat.

Hickok figures he's got nothing to lose. He hurries over to Agnes who is standing by the punch bowl.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
What's the best restaurant in this town?

AGNES
Delmonico's, why?

HICKOK
Because that's where we're goin'.

Hickok looks over at Cody who gives him an okay sign.

HICKOK
(continuing; to Cody)
Got any money?

Cody checks his pockets.

CODY
Nope. But we get paid tomorrow.

HICKOK
Why wait?

Hickok gives Agnes a quick kiss.

HICKOK
Help yourself to some punch. I'll be right back.

He heads for the door.

CODY
Hey, wait for me.

Cody follows him out.

A perplexed, but charmed, Agnes is left at the punch bowl.

EXT. NIBLO'S GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

Re-establish.

INT. MILLER'S OFFICE

It is dark. Hickok and Cody enter.

A soft GROAN from somewhere in the room. Cody lights a lamp as Hickok rushes over to --

A badly beaten Miller who is crumpled in the corner.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAMMANY HALL - NIGHT

Tweed comes out of the building. Nods goodbye to various flunkies. Makes his way over to his waiting landau.

The driver sits on the boot wrapped in a cloak.

INT. LANDAU

Tweed lifts his bulk inside. Plops down on the seat only to have a gun pointed at his head as Hickok leans out of the landau's shadows.

HICKOK
We've come for our money.

The driver leaps down off his seat and pulls open the door. Throws off his cloak to reveal Cody, who climbs aboard and cocks a pistol in Tweed's direction. The Boss remains calm.

TWEED
As I recall, you rejected my offer of employment.

CODY
The money Dolan took from Miller.

TWEED
Why come to me? Your problem's with John.

He tries to get up. Hickok pushes him back down.

HICKOK
He dances the jig. But you play the fiddle.

A beat. Then Tweed smiles graciously.

TWEED
Perhaps I did overreact. But I am so fond of pickled lobster.

He reaches in his breast pocket. Cody moves to stop him, but Hickok gestures that it's all right. Tweed pulls out a thick money clip.

TWEED
How much did John make off with?

CODY
Two hundred dollars.

CONTINUED:

TWEED
Is that all?

Peels off some bills.

TWEED
Here's four hundred. To pay for any inconvenience.

Cody counts out two hundred dollars and hands the rest back.

CODY
We'll just take what we're owed.

Tweed shrugs and puts his money away.

TWEED
Well then, I guess we're even.

HICKOK
Let's keep it that way.

TWEED
Perhaps it would be prudent if we stayed out of each others way from now on.

HICKOK
My thoughts exactly.

Hickok nods to Cody. They put up their guns and step out of the carriage.

TWEED
(smiling)
Goodbye, boys. It's a shame we couldn't do business together.

He leans back in his seat. The smile disappears.

INT. DOLAN'S HEADQUARTERS - HIS OFFICE - NIGHT

Maggie is busy sharpening the edges of her rings as Dolan peruses Tweed's ledger.

DOLAN
(begrudging admiration)
Twelve million dollars the fat bastard crooked from this city. And that's just what went into his pockets.

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE
(concentrating on her work)
The man's a genius.

DOLAN
He's a thief same as us. Never forget that.

Maggie doesn't answer. Dolan reaches over and grabs a handful of her hair twisting her head back.

DOLAN
You hear me?

MAGGIE
(in pain)
All right.

Slops sticks his head into the office.

SLOPS
Hey Johnny, I got a message for you from the Boss...

He stops, afraid that he's interrupted at the wrong time. A disgusted Dolan lets go of Maggie, shoving her back into her seat.

DOLAN
Well, go on. Talk.

SLOPS
He says Hickok and Cody are all yours.

DOLAN
Are they now?

That's just what he wanted to hear.

INT. AGNES' BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Agnes, wearing a demure nineteenth century dressing gown, responds to the SOUND of KNOCKING at the front door.

AGNES
I'm coming.

She opens the door, revealing Hickok carrying a large bouquet of flowers.

CONTINUED:

AGNES
(continuing)
Mr. Hickok...?

HICKOK
I'm sorry about dinner...
(hands her flowers)
Here. I brought these for you.

Agnes takes the bouquet.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hickok is seated at the kitchen table, surrounded by empty dishes. He swallows the last drops from his coffee cup and then leans back contented.

Agnes begins to clear the table.

HICKOK
Here, let me...

He leaps up, colliding with Agnes. She laughs as he grabs hold of her waist to steady her. Suddenly, they're only inches apart.

HICKOK
(continued; a beat, then with unexpected tenderness)
I swear, when you rode up in that parade, you were the prettiest thing I'd ever seen in my life.

And for a moment, it looks as if they're going to kiss. But then Agnes slips away, busying herself with the clean up.

AGNES
I'll never forget the first time I saw you, either. It was two years ago in Abilene.
(off Hickok's look of surprise)
I don't suppose you remember the circus passing through town.

HICKOK
Every day was a circus in Abilene.

AGNES
One of my roustabouts had gone off on a bender. I went looking for him up and down Texas Street. Found him in the Alamo Saloon.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
My unofficial headquarters.

AGNES
I walked in and there you were, seated at the poker table, back to the wall, bottle of whiskey at your elbow.

HICKOK
Was I winning?

AGNES
Not a hand.

HICKOK
That was me all right.

AGNES
I remember thinking - there sits the handsomest man I've ever seen. And the loneliest.

Hickok walks over and takes a stack of dishes out of her hands.

HICKOK
And what do you think now?

AGNES
I think nothing's changed.

He kisses her. She slips into his arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AGNES' ROOM - EVENING

Hickok and Agnes make love. Both Hickok and Agnes are pure nineteenth century romantics and their love making should reflect that.

What we should see is the beginning of a tender, caring and gentle relationship.

THE ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Agnes kisses Hickok awake. He takes her in his arms.

AGNES
I have to get going. Two o'clock matinee.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK
I still owe you a meal.

AGNES
I could slip away for an early lunch. Say eleven o'clock.

HICKOK
I'll meet you at Delmonico's.

AGNES
We don't have to go there.

HICKOK
You said it's the finest restaurant in the city.

AGNES
It is.

HICKOK
Then that's where we're eating.

She kisses him.

AGNES
You're a wonderful man, Bill Hickok.

HICKOK
One thing you oughta know. My name's not Bill. It's James. James Butler Hickok.

AGNES
How'd you become Wild Bill?

HICKOK
I stopped a lynching during the war. Somebody yelled out "Good for you, Wild Bill," and it just kinda stuck. But my family still calls me Jim. It would please me if you did the same.

AGNES
James...
(kisses him lightly)
...Butler...
(kisses him again)
...Hickok...I like it.

He kisses her back. With a happy sigh Agnes forces herself out of bed. She disappears into the bathroom.

CONTINUED:

Hickok gets out of bed and walks to the window. He pulls up the shade, winces from the light that comes streaming in. Quickly, he lowers the shade back down, bathing the room in shadow. He rubs his eyes, concerned.

INT. THE BREVEROOT HOTEL - LOBBY - LATER THAT MORNING

Dolan, Maggie, Slops and a bunch of the Five Points Gang enter the hotel. At a nod from Dolan, three of the gunmen head for the stairs.

The others stake out the room as Dolan makes himself comfortable in a leather easy chair.

INT. HICKOK'S ROOM

Cody breezes in.

CODY
Ain't you ready yet? Don't wanna keep Agnes waitin'.

Hickok is checking his appearance in the mirror.

HICKOK
Hold your water. Beats me why I'm even lettin' you come along.

CODY
It'll give me something nice to write Louisa. She's sure gonna be pleased to hear you found yourself a girl.

HICKOK
Agnes Lake is no girl. She's a lady.
(turning to Cody)
How'd I look?

CODY
Like a gentleman.

Notices the gun butts sticking out of Hickok's sash.

CODY
Except for all that artillery you're carryin'.

Hickok looks into the mirror. Thinks it over. Then takes the guns out of the sash and lays them on the table.

Cody grins. That's better.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The three gunmen check their pistols. Professional killers, their movements are confident and unhurried.

INT. HALLWAY - THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hickok and Cody head towards the elevator.

HICKOK
I'll meet you in the lobby.

He moves towards the staircase as the operator swings open the elevator doors.

CODY
Would you quit wastin' time. The way you act a fella'd think you were scared of this machine.

Hickok glares at Cody. He's tired of Cody riding him about that damn elevator. Figures he may as well get it over with and steps inside.

CODY
(smiling)
Of course, I never thought that myself.

The doors close.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As the gunmen react to the sound of the elevator coming towards them.

One of them leans over and pushes the elevator button.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Dolan and the others listen in anticipation.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Cody keeps an eye on his friend to see how he reacts.

Hickok's not thrilled with this little ride, but he refuses to show it.

Neither man is aware of the danger that awaits them.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The gunmen set themselves into position. Pistols pointed at the elevator door.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA favoring Hickok's waist. His open coat exposing the empty red sash.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Dolan waiting.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The elevator stops at the second floor. The elevator man opens the doors revealing

THE THREE GUNMEN

who begin firing.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The operator is killed outright. Hickok and Cody fling themselves to the floor.

Hickok reaches behind him and pulls out a HIDDEN GUN from the back of his sash.

He fires a half dozen times before he even hits the ground, killing all three gunmen.

It's all over in a matter of seconds.

Cody looks at Hickok's gun with sheepish surprise. Hickok is busy reloading while checking to see if anyone else is in the hallway.

CODY
You wouldn't have another one of those handy?

Hickok takes one of the dead men's pistols and shoves it into Cody's hand. Then grabs a second one for himself.

HICKOK
From here on, I'll stick to the stairs.

Cody's not about to argue the point.

INT. LOBBY

Dolan and the others watch as the elevator continues its descent. Dolan motions for two of his men to move closer to the doors. Weapons ready, they wait as the doors open to reveal -

THE THREE DEAD GUNMEN

The two gang members look into the elevator wondering what went wrong. Suddenly Cody swings down from the elevator ceiling kicking them both in the face. At the same time

HICKOK

comes down the stairs, guns at the ready. What happens next is like watching Mantle up at the plate or Ali in the ring. In other words, pure physical perfection.

Hickok whirls and, crossing over his right hand, shoots the two gunmen on his left, blowing them into the marble fountain. Then he spins and dives over the check-in counter dodging a hail of bullets.

He stands and with his left hand blasts away two of the gang members firing at him.

CODY

ducks as a bullet smashes a nearby statue. Cody returns the fire, killing a thug who is stationed behind a large settee.

THE HOTEL ENTRANCE

Dolan's had enough. This isn't going at all the way he had planned. He and the rest of his crew head for the door, firing rapidly to cover their retreat.

Hickok fires back at Dolan, but a fleeing gang member passing between them takes the bullet instead.

Dolan and the others bolt outside.

Hickok goes after them.

EXT. BREVEROOT HOTEL

Hickok comes running out into the sunshine, squinting against the light. He stumbles against the wall, shaking his head in an attempt to clear his vision.

He hears someone move behind him. Fighting back panic he turns to fire.

CONTINUED:

It's Cody who skids to a halt as Hickok's finger tightens on the trigger.

CODY
Bill, it's me!

Hickok jerks the gun away. He rubs his palm against his brow.

CODY
You all right?

HICKOK
I'm fine.
(off Cody's worried look)
I said I'm fine.

But he continues to rub at them.

CODY
Stay here.

Cody dashes off around the corner after Slops and the others.

HICKOK
Like hell.

Hickok goes after him.

EXT. DELMONICO'S

Dolan, Maggie, Slops and the others leap aboard an omnibus.

INT. OMNIBUS

Dolan waves his gun at the dozen passengers on the bus.

DOLAN
Off you go.

They're all too stunned to move.

Dolan abruptly shoots one of them dead.

DOLAN
Now!

The others race for the door.

Maggie throws the driver out after them.

EXT. STREET

The passengers scatter as the horses gallop off.

EXT. DELMONICO'S

Cody watches the bus drive off.

CODY
Shit!

Hickok comes up beside him.

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

Another omnibus pulls up.

EXT. DELMONICO'S

Cody runs for the second bus. Hickok follows.

INT. SECOND OMNIBUS

Only three other passengers. Hickok and Cody don't even take the time to ask them to leave. Cody shoves the driver away.

HICKOK
Can you drive this rig?

CODY
Hold on.

He slaps the reins. The horses take off. Hickok almost loses his footing.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE

The two omnibuses tearing down the street.

INT. FIRST OMNIBUS

Dolan and Slops begin firing out the window at their pursuers.

INT. SECOND OMNIBUS

A woman passenger starts screaming.

Hickok shoots back, wiping at his eyes as he fights to clear his vision.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE

The second omnibus creeps closer.

EXT. SIDE STREET

A large brewery wagon piled with beer barrels slowly pulls its way towards Fifth Avenue.

EXT. FIRST OMNIBUS

The horses spraying foam as they gallop.

EXT. SECOND BUS

Cody slapping the reins for more speed.

The woman passenger is screaming hysterically as she grabs hold of Hickok for protection. He struggles to get free as they slide around the bus. Finally, she hits her head against the wall, knocking herself out. Hickok dumps the unconscious woman on her husband's lap.

HICKOK
Sorry friend.

EXT. SIDE STREET

The brewery wagon rolling closer to the intersection.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE

Cody's team is closing the gap.

EXT. OPEN AIR MARKET

Vegetable, fruit and other trade good stands line both sides of the curb.

The streets are packed with shoppers.

The first omnibus comes careening through, scattering pedestrians everywhere.

The second bus is edging right up behind it. Cody has to duck out of the line of fire. Slops draws a bead on Hickok. Suddenly the

BREWERY WAGON

rolls out into the street broadsiding Cody's bus which jackknife's onto the sidewalk and overturns wiping out a whole block of market stalls.

CONTINUED:

It's a spectacular crash!

The brewery wagon piles onto Cody's bus, splintering apart and smashing open the beer barrels which drowns the street in suds.

EXT. THE WRECKAGE

The horses struggle to get clear of the debris.

The brewery driver lies crushed amongst his barrels.

Hickok, Cody and the other passengers stagger out from the suds.

Hickok kicks angrily at some rubble as he and Cody watch Dolan's omnibus disappear down the street.

TIME CUT:

EXT. OPEN AIR MARKET - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

The cleanup has begun. Cody is too pissed off to notice.

CODY
Goddamn it Bill! You've been havin' eye trouble all this time and never even told me.

Hickok reloads his Colts.

HICKOK
Nothing you could do.

CODY
That ain't the point.

Off Hickok's look -

CODY
I'm your friend.
(a beat)
Least ways I thought I was.

Cody turns and storms off down the street.

A stone faced Hickok watches him go.

INT. NIBLO'S GARDEN THEATRE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

A dejected Cody sits on the edge of the empty stage.

CONTINUED:

HICKOK (V.O.)
You're right.

Cody looks up as Hickok enters from the wings.

HICKOK
I should have told you.

Cody nods. He's not about to disagree.

CODY
You reckon Dolan'll try us again?

HICKOK
Count on it. And next time we may not be as lucky.
(a beat)
You know, I never thought much about dying. Never seemed to matter before. But now, after meeting Agnes, I'm thinking it's time I put down my guns and find myself a new game.

There's an echo of defeat in his mentor's voice that Cody's never heard before. It makes him awfully uneasy.

CODY
Come on, Bill. We can't let 'em run us out of town.

HICKOK
I'm not partial to the idea myself. Don't see where we have much choice, though.

CODY
Sure we do.

He rises, grinning with his trademark enthusiasm.

CODY
We could march down to Five Points and settle accounts once and for all.

An incredulous Hickok stares at Cody with barely suppressed anger.

HICKOK
Goddamn, why didn't I think of that. Hell, we could drag a crowd down there with us. Charge 'em seventy five cents a ticket. Why it would be epic.

CONTINUED:

CODY
I'm serious, Bill. We could get that goddamn ledger from Dolan.

HICKOK
How, by talkin' him to death?
(exploding)
You think this is one of your tall tales you dumb ass son of a bitch? That ain't Jake McKlandess waitin' for us down there.

CODY
Don't matter who it is. You and me, Bill. We could rip the horns off the devil himself.

Hickok looks at his friend. Realizes he's serious.

HICKOK
You really believe that?

CODY
Sure I do. Why not?

HICKOK
Because most mornings I get up creakin' like a new saddle. And no matter where I look it's like starin' into the sun.
(beat)
And as for you, you may dress like some snot nosed kid's idea of a frontier hero, but that don't make you one.

Cody punches Hickok in the face, knocking him on his ass. He gets up slowly.

HICKOK
(calmly)
That don't change a thing.

He walks away.

HOLD ON Cody trying to gather together his wounded pride.

INT. HICKOK'S ROOM - EVENING

A somber Hickok is packing his gear. A sympathetic Agnes looks to lighten his mood.

CONTINUED:

AGNES
I've been thinking about selling the circus for some time now. Maybe settle down in Cincinatti. I was born there.
(a beat)
I bet they have some real good eye specialists in Cincinatti.

Hickok looks over at her. Manages a grin.

HICKOK
Guess we'll find out, won't we?

That's all the encouragement Agnes needs. She gives him a tender hug.

AGNES
It'll be a good life. I promise.

There's a knock at the door.

HICKOK
Who's there?

No response.

Hickok picks up a gun and silently moves to the door. Listens carefully. Nothing.

He motions to Agnes to move over to the far side of the room. Nervously she does as he asks. Once she's in position, Hickok flings the door open, ready to fire.

No one's there.

A large box sits in front of the door.

Hickok checks the corridor. Empty.

He brings the box inside.

A relieved Agnes comes out of hiding.

AGNES
(smiling)
Who'd be sending you presents at this hour?

Hickok opens the box.

Brings out Cody's battered hat. Concern for his friend flashes across his face.

CONTINUED:

AGNES
Something wrong, Bill?

HICKOK
The goddamn fool went down to Five Points without me.

TIME CUT:

INT. HICKOK'S ROOM - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Hickok's weapons are lined up on the table.

He picks up one of the Colts, checks the loads and then secures it inside his sash.

He holds up a wicked looking bowie knife and hides it in a sheath in his boot.

He cracks open another Colt, grabs a handful of shells and begins feeding them into the cylinder. He looks over at

AGNES

who's worried, but knows this is something he has to do.

HICKOK

grimly reaching for another fistful of cartridges.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Maggie helps Dolan secure a wooden shutter over a window.

MAGGIE
I thought he'd be here by now.

They move close up to another window.

DOLAN
He's coming.

He bolts the shutter.

DOLAN
(continuing)
And it's a warm welcome we'll be givin' him.

CONTINUED:

He looks around the room, where a group of heavily armed men await his orders.

A battered Cody is slumped in a chair guarded by a GANGMEMBER who holds him captive with his own Winchester.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIVE POINTS - NIGHT

The area is dark. Deserted.

We hear the sound of bootheels ringing off the cobblestones. And then out of the shadows steps

HICKOK

looking as certain as the sunrise as he strides down the street -- a lone figure of strength and determination.

INT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Slops stands before Cody admiring his shiny black boots.

SLOPS
It's like I thought all along. These cowboys ain't nothin' but show.

GANGMEMBER
Maybe. But you didn't see what he done to Claude and Ugly Frank.

SLOPS
That was luck.
(a beat)
Why if I was wearin' them boots I'd look as big as him.

He kneels down to pull off one of the boots -- and takes a tremendous kick to the head from Cody who has been playing possum.

CODY
Don't bet on it.

Slops is out cold before he hits the floor.

Cody stands, but Maggie comes up alongside him and hits him across the face with her heavily ringed hand, knocking him back into the chair.

She raises her hand to deliver the knockout blow, but Dolan blocks her arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOLAN
Leave off.
(a beat; a smug grin)
I want him wide awake while we drink a jar over the carcass of his friend.

EXT. FIVE POINTS - A FEW BLOCKS FROM DOLAN'S

Two of Dolan's men, CHARLIE and DINK patrol the street. They are heavily armed.

A third sentry, JIGGERS, waves to them from down the block before disappearing into the darkness.

Charlie spits a stream of chewing tobacco onto the ground.

CHARLIE
Dandy John sure has the troops out tonight.

DINK
I hear he's put up five hundred in gold for whoever croaks Hickok.

CHARLIE
Shit, I'd do him for nuthin'.

Spits more tobacco as he pats his empty pockets.

CHARLIE
(continuing; an evil grin)
But gold sure does make a nice jingle.

There's a sudden noise to their left.

CHARLIE
Stay here.

He goes off to investigate.

Dink waits tensely for his return. Suddenly, a hand reaches out and pulls him O.S. Two thuds and we hear a body slump to the ground.

EXT. STREET

Charlie returns.

CHARLIE
Dink?

He's joined by Jiggers.

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE
Where the hell'd Dink go?

Jiggers looks down the street.

JIGGERS
Lazy bastard's probably off stealin' a drink.

CHARLIE
He was right here I tell ya.

He moves ahead of Jiggers into the darkness. A sudden groan - then silence.

JIGGERS
Charlie? Quit kiddin' around now.

Jiggers follows Charlie into the darkness. There's a thud and Jiggers turns back to the camera, a bowie knife embedded in his chest. He falls out of frame. Hickok appears behind him.

EXT. THE NEXT BLOCK

A sentry sits smoking a cigarette.

THE SHADOWS

Out steps Hickok.

HICKOK
I'm looking for John Dolan.

THE SENTRY

Fires both barrels at Hickok who ducks back behind a corner.

The sentry hurries to reload as Hickok reappears.

HICKOK
Friend, I hate to do this.

The sentry doesn't heed the warning. He lifts the scattergun. Before he can pull the trigger Hickok shoots him dead.

INT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Dolan sits listening to the SOUND of gunfire. Maggie leans over and bites him playfully on the ear. He pushes her away.

CONTINUED:

DOLAN
Stop nibbling on me with them tombstones.

CODY
Jumpy, ain't we?

The gunfire slackens.

DOLAN
I've got ten men out there. Hickok's probably dead already.

As the SOUND of shooting intensifies once again.

CODY
Don't sound like it.

Dolan is beginning to feel the pressure.

DOLAN
Some of you boys slip out the back. We'll surround him and end this thing once and for all.

For a moment, no one moves. Then a TALL THUG stands up.

TALL THUG
You heard John. Come on, lets...

A shotgun blast smashes through the shuttered window and kills him in mid-sentence.

Everyone dives for cover as the wall is perforated by shotgun fire.

EXT. ALLEY - ACROSS FROM SALOON

Hickok puts down the shotgun and unsheathes his bowie knife. He leans over the body of a dead sentry and takes a deep breath as he prepares himself for the task at hand.

HICKOK
(mumbling to himself)
Well, go on, the Cheyenne do it all the time.

A squeamish Hickok lifts the head up by the hair, pulling on it to tighten the skin around the hairline. He takes the knife and begins to cut.

INT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Something is thrown through one of the shattered windows. Dolan comes out from behind the bar and approaches it cautiously. Maggie and the others gather around as he lifts it up. To their horror, it's a fresh scalp.

DOLAN
Sweet Jesus, the man's a bloody savage.

As panic sweeps the room.

A shotgun blast takes out the door. Hickok comes in firing the second barrel.

Cody leaps out of his chair and slugs his Guard, grabbing the Winchester out of his hand. He begins firing.

AN OVERTURNED TABLE

Behind which Hickok has taken refuge. He takes out his Colts and keeps up a steady fire.

(NOTE: His eyesight is no longer much of a disadvantage since a blanket of gunsmoke has obscured much of the room.)

CODY

races out of the smoke and flops down beside Hickok who is busy wrapping a bloody hand.

CODY
(grinning)
You bring me my hat?

A beat, and then Hickok returns the grin as together they fire into the smoky room.

A bullet rips through the tail of Cody's jacket. He reaches inside his pocket and pulls out his photo of Louisa. Or what's left of it. The bullet has obliterated her face.

CODY
Son-of-a-bitch.

THE PRIVATE BOXES

A curtain from one of the boxes has caught fire. The flames begin to spread.

HICKOK AND CODY

things aren't looking too good.

HICKOK
We stay here much longer it's gonna be forever.

CODY
How would you have handled this in Abilene?

HICKOK
This never happened in Abilene.

And with that they push out from behind the table and charge into the room.

CODY

Finds himself face to face with Maggie.

MAGGIE
Hello again, dearie.

She picks up a bottle and tosses it at his head. He ducks. She throws herself on him, backing him against the bar.

She leans forward, trying to take a bite out of his face. Cody who's had about all he can stand of this bitch, breaks her hold and wallops her in the face, breaking her teeth and knocking her unconscious. Looking up he spots Dolan running towards the stairs. He moves to grab hold of him, but Dolan pulls out a Derringer and shoots him in the side. Cody goes down.

CODY
Bill!

Hickok turns and spots Dolan heading up the stairs. He follows.

Cody pulls himself to his feet, turns to see Slops coming at him. They fire simultaneously and Slops is killed.

Meanwhile the flames are raging out of control. It's time to get out of there.

EXT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Cody staggers out of the smoke.

CONTINUED:

Captain Williams and a police detail are there rounding up the surviving gang members.

WILLIAMS
Cody!

CODY
What brings you down here, Captain?

WILLIAMS
Thought you might need a hand. I haven't heard such a ruckus since Gettysburg.

He grabs hold of an unsteady Cody.

INT. DOLAN'S SALOON - SECOND FLOOR

Hickok dodges flames as he kicks open a door looking for Dolan.

DOLAN

comes out of his office, ledger box in one hand, cane in the other. He sees Hickok and pulls away the top of the cane revealing a sword. He slashes at Hickok. Misses. Hickok grabs for the sword. They struggle against the railing.

Hickok forces Dolan's wrist back until he drops the sword over the edge.

Dolan knees Hickok in the groin, knocking him back. But Hickok manages to tear the ledger out of Dolan's grasp. Dolan reaches to grab it. Suddenly his section of the balcony gives way and Dolan plummets into the flames.

Hickok forces himself to his feet. There's no way for him to get back downstairs. The flames are all around him when he spots a window at the other end of the balcony.

Clasping the ledger to his chest, he races past the flames. With a heroic leap, he crashes through the window.

EXT. DOLAN'S SALOON

Hickok bursts through the window and flails through the air.

Cody and Williams watch in amazement.

For a moment, it seems as if Hickok is suspended in mid-air. Then he comes crashing into a garbage dump.

CONTINUED:

Cody limps over to a groaning Hickok, and lowers himself down beside him.

WILLIAMS
Christ almighty, he got the ledger!

A weary Cody slaps Hickok on the back.

HICKOK
What the hell you grinning for?

CODY
Goddamn it Bill, we did it! We finished off Jake McKlandess for real.

Hickok is too busy trying to get his wind back to argue the point.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Re-establish.

INT. COURTHOUSE

A confident Tweed sits eating grapes from a wax paper bag as his LAWYER addresses the jury.

LAWYER
... And so my good citizens, the prosecution has been unable to bring forward one shred of concrete evidence that would prove my client guilty of any wrong doing. Therefore, it is your duty to return a verdict of not guilty so that this good man can...

The SOUNDS of commotion in the outer hall brings puzzled glances in the Courtroom.

The door is kicked open and in comes Hickok and Cody.

LAWYER
(continuing)
Look here, you can't...

HICKOK
We already have.

They walk over to the Defense table and Hickok slams the ledger down in front of Tweed.

The Boss drops his grapes.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Tweed, in handcuffs, is led out of the courtoom by Captain Williams. A swarm of reporters crowd around them.

Hickok and Cody, favoring his wounded side, as Tweed is placed in a police wagon.

CODY
Wonder how he'll like eatin' prison food?

HICKOK
He's got the rest of his life to get used to it.

Tilden and Bennett come out of the courthouse. Tilden is all smiles as he waves away some reporters so that he can talk with Hickok and Cody.

TILDEN
Gentlemen, I can't thank you enough for all you've done.

CODY
Wasn't you we did it for.

TILDEN
My goal now will be to make New York the greatest city in the world.

Tilden shakes their hands.

CODY
Good luck.

HICKOK
You'll need it.

Tilden's smile fades momentarily as he turns to meet the reporters.

Cody nudges Hickok.

CODY
(pointing)
You got company.

EXT. THE STREET

Agnes is walking down the block. She smiles and waves hello. Hickok moves toward her -- wincing as the sun's rays bounce off the white marble courthouse, searing his sensitive eyes, when suddenly:

DOLAN

filthy and half crazed, leaps out of a doorway and grabs Agnes around the neck. He shoves a gun to her temple. Hickok freezes.

DOLAN
They say you're a betting man, Mr. Hickok. I'll wager I can blow her head off before you even clear your gun.

Dolan cocks his pistol.

Agnes moves slightly and Dolan jams the gun against her head.

DOLAN
Well, what do you say, Hickok? Time's running out.

HICKOK

struggling to clear his vision. Sweat beading his forehead.

HICKOK'S POV

A white glare partially obscures Dolan and Agnes.

HICKOK

He knows he has to make his move. His hand inches towards one of the Colts.

HICKOK'S POV

A clear shot seems impossible when suddenly we hear:

VOICE
Friend, I hate to do this.

There's a gunshot and a bullet hits Dolan in the forehead. Agnes ducks out of his grasp.

THE STREET

A surprised Hickok whirls around as

CODY

pleased he's gotten to utter Hickok's signature line, lowers a smoking rifle. He grins at Hickok.

CONTINUED:

THE STREET

Hickok takes Agnes into his arms.

Cody tosses the rifle back to one of the prison guards.

In a moment, the three of them are mobbed by reporters.

REPORTERS
Never seen such shooting... Mr. Hickok...Mr. Hickok... A statement please.

Hickok places a hand on Cody's shoulder.

HICKOK
Gentlemen, this is the man you should be speaking to. Buffalo Bill Cody... A true hero of the American West.

Cody looks over at Hickok, who smiles, pats him on the shoulder.

A silent beat between the two friends and then Hickok takes Agnes by the arm and makes his way through the reporters, leaving Cody as the center of attention.

EXT. BREVEROOT HOTEL - THE NEXT MORNING

Hickok and Cody step out of the hotel.

CODY
I'll get a cab and take you to the station.

HICKOK
I've had my fill of cabs.

Agnes' white stallion waits by the curb.

Hickok grabs hold of the reins. He turns back to Cody. An awkward moment between them.

CODY
You figure on stayin' in Cincinatti permanently.

HICKOK
Sure do. But first I'll be heading out to Dakota Territory. Hear they struck gold over in the Black Hills.

CONTINUED:

CODY
You gonna become a nugget digger?

HICKOK
Only until I make my fortune.

CODY
There's a fortune to be made right here.

HICKOK
Not for me there isn't.

A long beat. Cody knows he's right. Still, it's not easy to say goodbye.

HICKOK
Now don't go believin' that dime novel hogwash they write about you.

CODY
And don't go gambling away all that gold you're gonna find.

They shake hands.

HICKOK
(tongue in cheek)
Adios, Great Scout.

CODY
(likewise)
Adios, Prince of Pistoleers.

Hickok swings into the saddle, touches his hat and reins the horse toward the street.

CODY
All told, we gave this town a pretty good show.

Hickok wheels the horse back around.

HICKOK
Pretty good, hell.

He rears the stallion up on its hind legs and waves his hat in the air.

HICKOK
(continuing)
It was epic!

CODY

grins and waves back in farewell. FREEZE FAME and SUPERIMPOSE the following:

> "In 1883, after touring in plays for ten years, Buffalo Bill Cody created his legendary Wild West Show. Beloved by kings and commoners around the world, he would earn and spend millions of dollars during his lifetime. He died in 1917, at the age of 70."

His horse still in mid-air. FREEZE and SUPERIMPOSE the following:

> "Wild Bill Hickok married Agnes Lake on March 2, 1876. On August 2nd of that year, he was shot in the back of the head by Jack McCall while playing poker in Nuttall and Mann's Number 10 Saloon, Deadwood Dakota Territory. He was thirty-nine."

DISSOLVE TO:

Hickok and Cody from earlier in the film. RUN CREDITS.

FADE OUT.

THE END